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DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY OF BANGLADESH: BASIC NEEDS APPROACH

I. INTRODUCTION

Within a span of little more than 30 years¹ experiments have been made with a number of Western development models in Bangladesh, mainly as a part of political expediency. In the fifties and early sixties, the strategy was to attain growth of GNP under the heroic assumption that benefits of developments in growth-sensitive sectors like urban-based industries would 'trickle down' to all other sectors, and for that matter, to all population groups. A natural corollary was to protect domestic industries through import substitution and over-valued currency and a price-structure that siphoned off surplus from rural agriculture to urban-based industries. The assumption, however, proved unfounded; agriculture in Bangladesh stagnated from a position of food-surplus at the time of Partition in 1947 and the rate of growth in food-grains production was below that of population in the sixties.² Industry thrived at the cost of agriculture and urban sector

1. Inclusive of Bangladesh's (the then East Pakistan) political association with Pakistan.
2. For a detailed account of food production over time, see Mahbub Hossain, "Foodgrain Production in Bangladesh: Performance, Potential and Constraints", paper presented at special seminar on *Food Policy and Development Strategy in Bangladesh* organized by the Bangladesh Economic Association in Dacca, March 1980.

at the cost of rural sector, poverty situation and mass deprivation exacerbated.³ Introduction of seed-fertilizer-irrigation-based Green Revolution in the mid-sixties again was merely sectoral extension of the same growth model, in that, the rich farmers benefited at the cost of small, marginal farmers and landless people.⁴

After liberation, the socio-political condition of the country apparently changed and the political leadership advocated as well as intended to go for grass-root planning and growth with equity. The latter was reflected in nationalisation of key sectors and financial institutions. But changes in perception about concept of planning were shown only in the preambular chapters of the plan documents through laying out basic principles, objectives and strategies. But when the actual formulation of development plans and allocation of resources came, many crucial variables relating to social, economic and cultural issues were just assumed away and the basic tenets and pattern of allocation remained, more or less, the same. Of course, indigenous colour was given through introduction of Basic Democracy, Village Agriculture and Industrial Development (V-AID) Programme, IRDP, Test Relief, Rural Works Programme and Gram Sarker (Village Government), the latest in the series.

3. See Mohiuddin Alamgir, "Some Analysis of Distribution of Income, Consumption, Saving and Poverty in Bangladesh", *Bangladesh Development Studies*, Vol. II, No. 4, 1974.
4. See Steve Jones, "An Evaluation of Rural Development Programmes in Bangladesh", *Journal of Social Studies*, No. 6, (December 1970), pp. 51-92. For country experience, see, K. Griffin, *Political Economy of Agrarian Changes*. (London : Macmillan) 1974 and B. Dasgupta, *Agrarian Change and the New Technology in India*, UNRISD, Geneva, 1977.

Again, operationally speaking, implementation of the Five Year Plans through integration of Annual Development Plans, which are, in fact, arithmetic summation of projects, streamlined procedure of according sanction to projects—all this gave economists, technicians and bureaucrats a great deal of control over scarce resources. Top heavy planning process led to dissipation of much of the resources and the targets were lost in the complexities of techniques and superstructures. Thus there has not been any reversion or containment of mass deprivation. Against the backdrop of these brisk array of models, Five Year Plans, Annual Development Plans, and elaborate intersectoral input-output model, one statement would be sufficient to portray the present situation of Bangladesh—70m. out of a total of 87m. population of Bangladesh live below poverty line.⁵ This means that basic needs of more than 80 per cent of the population remain unsatisfied.

Evidently the traditional development strategy with cosmetic changes failed to ameliorate this appalling poverty situation. Against this perspective the author attempts to make a case for Basic Needs Approach (BNA), which is the latest in the series of development thinking starting from the growth-based strategy of the mid-fifties. Building of a full-fledged model of Basic Needs Approach for Bangladesh is beyond the scope of

5. Revealed by Planning Minister, Government of Bangladesh, in a Press interview, *The Bangladesh Observer*, 18 January 1980. The World Bank Poverty Line was US \$ 66 at 1969 constant prices. See World Bank, *The Assault on World Poverty*, 1975.

this paper. The sole objective of the paper is to provoke thoughts and discussion in the field where some developing countries have made commendable progress.

The paper first takes a digression to review the developments of thoughts and country experiences in Basic Needs Approach. Then attempt has been made to build a case for BNA in Bangladesh, through portraying the situation of various indicators of Basic Needs and dealing with a number of issues relating to application of BNA in Bangladesh. In the concluding section some areas for further research in the field have been indicated.

II. BASIC NEEDS APPROACH AS A DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

2.1. What is Basic Needs Approach ?

The main content of Basic Needs Approach is that the major and immediate objective of development strategy should be reducing mass deprivation through satisfaction of basic and immediate needs. There has been confusion as to whether the aim of the BNA is to attain certain level of consumption of select basic goods or attaining a full development of human life.* While the first approach is operational, the second gives the rationale for the first. Paul Streeten, one of the proponents of BNA combines the two approaches

6. See S. J. Burki, "Meeting Basic Needs Within the Framework of Mixed Economies", *Strategic Studies*, Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad, Vol. III, No-2, Winter 1980.

and defines BNA as one which is "designed to improve, first, the income earning opportunities for the poor; second, the public services that reach the poor; third, the flow of goods and services to meet the needs of all members of the households; and fourth, participation of the poor in the ways in which their needs are met."⁷

Among the advocates of the BNA are not only bilateral and multilateral donor agencies (World Bank taking the leading role) but also thinkers from the Third World. Some of the prominent documents containing such views are the *Declaration of Cocoyoc* (1974), *What Now—Another Development* (1975), prepared by the Dag Hammarskjold Foundation, *Catastrophe or New Society* (1975), prepared by the Bariloche Foundation in Argentina and *Reshaping the International Order* (1976).⁸ It might be argued that Basic Needs Approach is a stage in the thinking and responses to the challenges presented by development over the past 25 years or so. There is no denying of the fact that the basic objective of all development strategies have been benefitting the mass of people. But in the 1950s the emphasis was on growth as the most effective way of eradicating poverty. It was on the growth of income, particularly in the modern, organized, large-scale industrial activities, that the hope for improvement in basic welfare was built. This view was supported by analysis based on the U-shaped Kuznets curve which

7. See Paul Streeten, "From Growth to Basic Needs", *Finance & Development* (Vol. 16, No. 3), Sept., 1979, p. 29.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

has strongly influenced thinking about development.⁹ But the expectation did not come true, the poor remained poor or their condition worsened. Reaction to performance of growth-theory was to turn to creation of employment as the means of reaching benefits to the poor. But since 1969, work of the International Labour Organization (ILO) missions in seven countries has shown that 'employment' and 'unemployment' as defined in industrialised world, are not operational and meaningful concepts for a strategy to reach the poor. Various empirical studies have found that the root problem of poverty is not unemployment. The problem is somewhere else. Most of the poor people are engaged in hard and long-hour but unremunerative and unproductive type of activities. The problem was then re-defined as that of the "Working Poor."¹⁰ Attention was then switched on to growth with equity. The book entitled *Re-distribution with Growth* published by the World Bank and the Sussex Institute of Development Studies in 1974 was concerned with re-distribution. But the question remained whether equality *per se* was of more concern to the people than satisfaction of Basic Needs. Besides, equality is a highly complex and abstract goal difficult to be implemented and measured. On the other hand, the latest approach of Basic Needs is a logical step along the path of development thinking. It is less abstract, more disaggregated, concise and specific. It is finely tuned to the objective of develop-

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

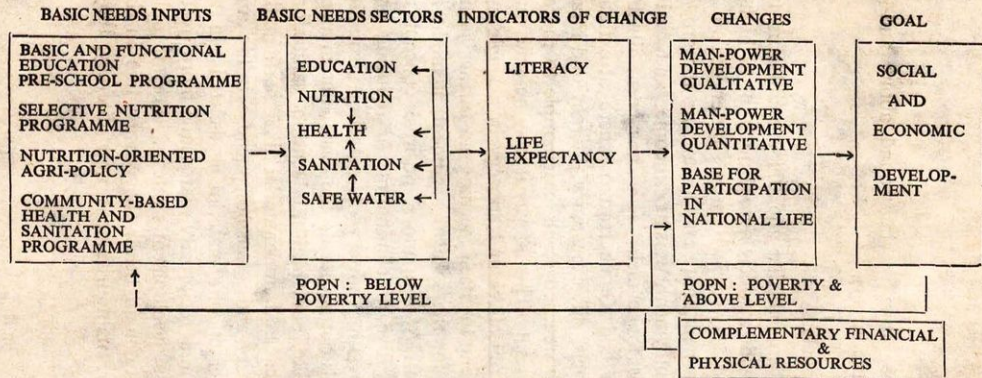
ment rather than having round about and indirect link with the targets.

2.2. Rationale

It is argued that the BNA enables us to arrive at and provide a widely agreed upon list of high-priority goods and services within a shorter period of time than the roundabout way of aiming for growth, providing employment, raising income and waiting for basic needs to be met. This has been illustrated by Sri Lanka and Kerala (India) where at extremely low income levels, life expectancy, literacy and infant mortality have reached levels comparable to more advanced countries.¹¹ This is why it may be said that BNA combines objectives and strategy in a single approach. It is an end in itself needing no further justification. However, for the sake of argument, it might be adduced that BNA is a more positive concept than the double negative of eliminating or reducing unemployment, alleviating poverty or reducing inequality. The BNA spells out in details the basic human needs, both material like food, health, education, sanitation, water, shelter etc. and non-material like participation, cultural identity and a sense of purpose in life and work, which interact with material needs. It is, in fact, participation and reciprocity that lends more justification to BNA as development strategy. For, if bulk of the population remain below the poverty line in the midst of hunger, malnourishment and illiteracy, they remain

11. Ibid.

TABLE 1: BASIC NEEDS MODEL : SECTORAL LINKAGES AND PRIORITIES*



* Prepared on the basis of existing literature on Basic Needs. See S. J. Burki, "Basic Needs : Sectoral Priorities". *Finance and Development*, (Vol. 17, No. 1), March 1980.

beyond the mainstream of the national life; they neither participate in development programmes, nor can reciprocate to public programmes through administrative and fiscal machinery. What BNA purports to do is to satisfy the minimum high-priority needs of the people directly so that their level is brought up to a position from where they can identify themselves with national culture, social and economic goals and aspirations. This has been illustrated in a rather rudimentary model as shown in Table 1. The model identifies the Basic Needs sectors and indicators like literacy, life expectancy etc. and assesses the impact of Basic Needs inputs on those indicators and for that matter, on economic and social development.

2.3. Growth and Basic Needs

Satisfaction of Basic Needs *per se* and taking BNA as a strategy of development are two different things. To be a viable strategy, BNA must ensure sustained growth. Unfortunately the debate is still at empirical level and there is no conclusive evidence either. Countries giving emphasis on Basic Needs such as Burma, Cuba, Sri Lanka and Tanzania have attained certain level of Basic Needs at the cost of growth rates of output while Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore have attained relatively rapid growth with commendable progress in Basic Needs.¹² Moreover, the empirical studies are mostly partial in that they do not take

12. Norman L. Hicks, "Growth and Basic Needs : Is there a Trade-Off ?", *Finance and Development*, (Vol. 17, No. 2), June 1980, p. 17.

into account all indicators of Basic Needs to show their relationship with growth. In what follows, findings of various studies attempting to explain relationship between growth and Basic Needs have been presented.

2.3.1. Education and growth: Some economists have tried to measure the rate of return from education by estimating the life-time earnings of people with various levels of education as compared to private and social costs of education. A survey of 17 developing countries by Psacharopoulos (1973) found an average return of 25 per cent for primary education.¹³ However, it has been contended that such estimates may contain upward bias because they capture the "screening" effect of higher education. Nadiri (1972) concluded from a survey of published literature that education was not very useful in explaining differences in growth rates between developing countries. Thus individual contribution of education to growth is yet to be established though the general consensus is that education is an investment in human resources which, in turn, contributes to growth.

2.3.2. Health, Nutrition and Growth: Other studies shifted their focus from education to nutrition and came out with the finding that health and nutrition have important contribution to GNP. Correa, for example, found such relationship for a group of Latin American countries.

2.3.3. Life expectancy and Growth: Attempt to show relationship between life expectancy and

13. Ibid., p. 180.

growth is a better approach for it contains the effects of Basic Needs inputs like education, health and nutrition. Hicks¹³ has combined and analysed these variables using multiple-regression technique on the cross-country data for 1960-73.¹⁴ The statistical model also took care of influence of other factors like investment rate, growth rate of imports etc. The analysis concluded that countries which had life expectancies 10 (ten) years higher than expected tended to have per capita growth rate 0.7 to 0.9 percentage points higher.

Thus the country experiences suggest that a Basic Needs emphasis on development augments, rather than reduces, growth rates. However, one thing has to be pointed out here about the methods of analysis and nature of data. While in the theoretical framework the qualitative aspects of Basic Needs are taken into accounts, the conventional methods of analysis of empirical data fails to consider them. To me, it is the qualitative change that is significant so far the purpose of meeting Basic Needs is concerned. Similarly, taking enrolment in primary schools as data base for education or literacy is also questionable, as also has been pointed out by Burki.¹⁵

2.4. Aspects of Basic Needs

The digression on reviewing the developments

14. Ibid, p. 20.

15. S. Javed Burki, op. cit., pp. 31-32.

of Basic Needs Approach would be concluded with pointing out three different aspects of Basic Needs for planning purposes.¹⁶

2.4.1. Production Framework : The production framework takes care of which sector is to be given priority for production of Basic Needs goods and services. Three sectors are identified—Basic Needs sector covering education, health, food, shelter etc., non-basic needs sector and investment sector which indirectly contributes to both Basic Needs goods and non-basic needs goods.

2.4.2. The Organization framework : The organization-framework determines how much weightage to be given on each of the three institutions—the market forces, public sector and households—for distribution of Basic needs goods and services. In most cases market forces fail to generate and reach the right kind of goods and services to the poor. But significance of public sector and household sector cannot be over-emphasised. Some of the basic goods and services like education, health, sanitation has to be generated in the public sector. On the other hand, the household is the ultimate converter of Basic needs goods and services for improving the quality of life. In particular, health and nutrition of children depend to a great extent on the households.

16. This macro-economic framework was first developed by J. Fei, G. Ranis and F. Stewart in "Basic Needs : A framework for Analysis", mimeo. The World Bank 1979, cited in S. J. Burki, *op. cit.*

2.4.3. The Income Framework : The income framework looks into which type of income—wages, property, transfer and household—contributes more to Basic Needs of the households, or, whose income in the households goes more to Basic Needs sector. Evidences are not conclusive but it is presumed that proportion of expenditure on Basic Needs is considerably higher in case of non-wage household income than in case of wages. But when non-wage income has no predictable flow, it is wage income that is spent on food, nutrition, health, clothes etc. It is also presumed that women spend a much more larger proportion of their income on providing Basic Needs to their families than do men.

The frameworks as outlined above help the planners in identifying the areas of intervention. What type of goods to be produced, in what sector, to facilitate actual production and distribution and finally what type of income can generate effective demand for basic goods—all are very basic questions to be solved.

III. BASIC NEEDS APPROACH AS A DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR BANGLADESH

An advocacy for Basic Needs Approach as a development strategy for Bangladesh requires understanding of: (i) the dimension of poverty in Bangladesh, (ii) how level of such poverty affects growth, and (iii) how an anti-poverty BNA would affect growth. However,

as defined earlier, rigorous development of (ii) and (iii) is beyond the scope of this paper. In what follows, we first look into the dimension of poverty in Bangladesh, then Basic Needs contents of various development programmes of government and non-government agencies in Bangladesh are reviewed, and finally, a number of issues relating to the implementation of BNA in Bangladesh is raised.

3.1. Dimension of Poverty in Bangladesh

3.1.1. Food and Nutrition : Official Sources¹⁷ estimate that out of a total of 87m. population in Bangladesh,¹⁸ 52m. are malnourished. One study indicated that 93 per cent of the rural households could not meet Riboflavin and Vitamin A requirement 81 per cent were deficient in Calcium and 59 per cent in Calorie requirement.¹⁹ The same study also revealed that per capita intake of Calorie, Fat, Carbohydrate, Vitamin A and Vitamin C decreased considerably in 1975-76 as compared to 1962-64 when the first nutrition survey was carried out in Bangladesh. Similarly, there has been a consistent shortage of per capita food-grain availability as compared to requirement²⁰ as would be evident from Table 2.

17. Bangladesh Planning Minister, op. cit.

18. Latest estimate of population is 90m.

19. Institute of Nutrition and Food Science, *Economic and Nutritional Effects of Bangladesh Food for Relief Works Programme, 1977* and *Nutrition Survey of Bangladesh, Dacca, 1975.*

20. Per Capita per day requirement is taken at 15 oz. The figure, originally at 16 oz, is a legacy of as back as 1943 when the British Government

Table 2: Per capita Availability of Food-grains in Bangladesh 1964-79.

Year	Estimated Population (millions)	Pea capita per day availability of food (in lbs.)	Index*
1964-65	59.9	16.5	101.9
1965-66	61.7	16.2	100.0
1966-67	63.5	14.9	92.0
1967-68	65.3	16.0	98.8
1968-69	67.2	16.5	101.9
1979-70	69.2	17.5	108.0
1970-71	70.8	15.2	93.8
1971-72	72.4	14.4	88.9
1972-73	74.0	14.6	90.1
1973-74	76.2	15.7	96.9
1974-75	77.0	15.6	96.3
1975-76	78.9	15.4	95.1
1976-77	80.8	13.3	82.1
1977-78	82.7	15.2	93.8
1978-79	84.6	14.4	88.9

*Five Years average of 1965-66—1969-70=100

Source: Bureau of Statistics, Govt. of Bangladesh, *Statistical Pocket Book 1978*, and *Statistical Year Book of Bangladesh 1974* and Ministry of Food.

To be precise, the per capita availability as depicted above is a theoretical distribution. Actual availability to the people is determined by production and purchasing power. Thus, the average picture does not say what proportion of population were below subsistence, what proportion above, or what proportion just balanced.

had to calculate the amount of shipping space to be diverted from carrying ammunition to food following the great famine of Bengal. See Jast Faaland and J. R. Parkinson, *Bangladesh: A Test Case of Development*, (Dacca: University Press Ltd.), 1977.

- 3.1.2. Education: Education in Bangladesh is qualitatively and quantitatively below the level at which the educated population may be considered as human capital for development. The literacy rate in Bangladesh is only 23 per cent which is one of the lowest among developing countries. Again, if primary enrolment data is considered, it is found that it has decreased from 8.8m. (73 per cent of the age) in 1975 to 7.0m. in 1981.²¹ But more disconcerting is the fact that the education system in Bangladesh is not functional and is divorced from the method of production.
- 3.1.3. Basic Health: Health situation is equally appalling. Public health facilities have been conspicuously inadequate. Over a period of 12 years since 1965, number of population per hospital bed decreased by only about 3,000 from the bench-mark figure of 88,344 as is shown in Table 3. On the other hand, number of population per registered doctor in fact increased indicating that increase in population has not been matched by increase in number of registered doctors.

What has been depicted above is the supply side of health and medicare facilities. But the actual utilization by mass of the people is limited by procedural complicacies and their concentra-

21. State Minister for Education, Government of Bangladesh in *Játya Sangshad* (National Assembly) on 20 June 1981, See *Daily Ittefaq* (Bengali), 21 June 1981.

Table 3: Health and Medicare Facilities 1965-1977

Year	No. of beds in Govt. Hospitals & Dispensaries*	No. of Registered Doctors*	Population per bed**	Population per Doctor**
1965	6,984	6,864	88,344	89,889
1966	7,074	6,989	89,765	90,857
1967	7,080	7,105	92,231	91,007
1968	7,193	7,516	93,535	89,499
1969	7,193	7,950	92,352	87,044
1970	7,493	7,961	84,416	88,933
1971	8,387	7,149	78,244	1,01,272
1972	9,253	7,482	58,470	98,904
1973	12,656	5,001	60,241	1,52,369
1974	12,649	5,047	60,874	1,52,565
1975	12,649	6,223	51,061	1,26,787
1976	15,452	6,985	51,702	1,14,531
1977	15,463	7,837	53,482	1,05,525

*Directorate of Health Services as quoted in *Statistical Year Book of Bangladesh 1979*, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, p. 404.

**Calculated by the author on the basis of population as in Table 2.

tion mainly in urban centres. Table 4 would give an indication of the extent of utilization of existing facilities by the people. The figures in the table show urban-rural variation. The existing Rural Health Centres, Thana Health Complex, and Maternity and Child Welfare Centres were found to be least used.

Bulk of rural population of Bangladesh are traditional in their health practices. Basic health education is lacking. They avoid institutional medical facilities unless forced by seriousness of the disease.

Table 4: Number of Beds and Bed Occupancy (as in July 1978)

Type of Facilities	No. of Facilities	No. of Beds	% of beds found occupied on the day of visit.
District Hospital	12	1,212	171.0
Sub-Divisional Hospital	39	1,769	68.0
Other Hospitals of Health Division	31	1,416	73.0
Thana Health Complex	188	2,755	37.4
Rural Health Centre	47	259	40.5
Maternity and Child Welfare Centre	63	469	32.1
Hospital by Voluntary Organisations	129	3,012	69.2
Others	92	1,950	95.5
Total	589	12,337	—

Source: Population Control and Family Planning Division as quoted in *Statistical Year Book of Bangladesh 1979*, p. 408.

3.1.4. Life Expectancy and Infant Mortality: Average life expectancy in Bangladesh was 39 years in 1960 and it increased to only 42 years in 1975.²² This low life expectancy reflects the nutrition condition on the one hand and poor health facilities on the other. Infant mortality rate is similarly high. About one quarter of all children die before the fifth birthday, those who

22. World Bank, *World Development Report 1979*, (Washington: World Bank), 1979.

survive are smaller and lighter than they would be with better food.²³

Another way of looking at poverty is to know the overall poverty level in Bangladesh. Such attempts have been made by Alamgir²⁴ and Khan²⁵ separately. Alamgir calculated the bench-mark level of poverty using cost of minimum nutritional requirement per person at 1966 constant prices for the period 1963-69. According to him, below poverty population in 1968-69 was 6.24 per cent in urban areas and 71.3 per cent in rural areas. Though Alamgir found the poverty situation to have declined over the study period, he hinted that proportion of below poverty population might have increased in the 1970s.

Table 5: Percentage and Number of People below Minimum Level of Living in Rural and Urban Areas of Bangladesh.

Year	Urban		Rural	
	Below Tk. 298		Below Tk. 252	
	%	No. (m.)	%	No. (m.)
1963	73.6	2.91	87.6	49.89
Jan-June 1965	70.2	3.08	54.2	31.66
April-June 1966	81.9	3.83	N.A.	N.A.
1967	62.7	3.34	51.2	31.32
1968-69	62.4	3.88	71.3	45.76

Source: Mohiuddin Alamgir, fn. 24

N.A. —Not Available.

23. Jast Faaland and J. R. Parkinson, op. cit.

24. Mohiuddin Alamgir, op. cit., pp. 782-84.

25. A. R. Khan, "Poverty and Inequality in Bangladesh", in *Poverty and Landlessness in Rural Asia*, ILO, Geneva, 1977.

Khan, on the other hand, came out with the finding that the proportion of 'absolutely poor' households in rural areas increased from 52 per cent to 87 per cent between 1963-64 and 1973-74 and the proportion of 'extremely poor' increased from 10 per cent to 54 per cent during the same period.²⁶ As to urban poverty, the Centre for Urban Study of Dacca University found that 94.4 per cent of the poor households in urban areas of Bangladesh could not even manage Tk. 6.00 income per capita per day as minimum sustenance requirement.²⁷

In such a poverty situation conventional planning for development with systemic bias against the poor is unlikely to bring about the desired all-round social and economic development. If the minimum living is not ensured for all, the so-called and much talked-about grass-root planning with people's participation is likely to falter. And this requires a complete re-orientation of inter-sectoral and intra-sectoral priority to meet Basic Needs requirements.

3.2. Basic Needs Content in Existing Development Programmes in Bangladesh.

3.2.1. Overall Framework : An idea about the overall framework of the development policy of Bangladesh may be obtained from the Second Five Year Plan (1980-85) document. The Second

26. Ibid.

27. See Centre for Urban Studies, *Urban Poor in Bangladesh* (Dacca : UNICEF), 1979.

Five Year Plan has been formulated "in the context of overwhelming problems of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and malnutrition of the mass, mostly living in the rural areas".²⁸ Among others, one of the objectives of the Plan is to "bring about a noticeable improvement in the standard of living by adequate supplies of the basic needs".²⁹ The operational part of the anti-poverty strategy consists of creation of employment and human resources development which would ensure enough earning to have command over the Basic Needs of life. But, as also we have seen in Section 2.1., creation of employment for subsequent meeting of Basic Needs is not a viable strategy in a country where the problem is one of under-employment or employment in un-remunerative work. Technical skill of the rural under-employed mass, as envisaged in the Plan, can be increased, but sufficient expansion of gainful job opportunities for huge reservoir of man-power is a difficult proposition to foresee in the immediate future.

A perusal of the sectoral allocation pattern (Table 6) will also show that the Plan is characterised by urban-bias and lacks the antipoverty fervour as is projected in the earlier chapters of the Plan.

28. Planning Commission, Government of Bangladesh, *The Second Five year Plan (1980-85)*, Dacca 1980.

29. Ibid.

Table 8 : Sectoral Allocation Pattern of the Second Five Year Plan (1980-85)

Sector	% of Total Outlay
Agriculture and Related Activities	29.05
Industry	17.13
Power, Natural Resources & Scientific and Technical Research	11.39
Transport	14.53
Physical Planning & Housing	8.67
Communication	3.26
Health, Population & Family Planning	4.85
Socio-economic Infra-structure including Education	6.12
Trade & Services	5.00
Total	100.00

Source : Planning Commission, *Second Five Year Plan 1980-85* (Draft) Chapter II, P.10-11.

Taken by face value, health, population and family planning sector, social infra-structure sector and part of agriculture sector may be considered to be oriented to Basic Needs which together account for less than 40 percent of the plan outlay. And how much employment and income generation is effected for the poor through development outlays in other sectors is highly debatable. At least, most of the development outlays in agriculture is spent on irrigation, fertilizer, pesticides and HYV seeds which benefit the large farmers. Equally debatable is the basic-needs content of development

activities in agriculture, health and education sectors.

- 3.2.2. Specific sectors : We may start with food and nutrition sector where a very gloomy picture has been portrayed by Reutlinger and Selowsky³⁰ who have projected that annual per capita income of lower income groups of India and Bangladesh (which account for two-thirds of the global of calorie-deficient population) is not expected to exceed 1.5 per cent per annum while empirical evidences suggest that calorie intake will rise by a proportion of 0.5. On the basis of these assumptions, it would take 30 years before poorest 20 per cent of the population could reach an adequate level calorie intake.

Against this projection, the nutrition-prospect of the Food for Works Programme (FWP) introduced in 1976 may be assessed. Steve Jones calls FWP as primarily, but not exclusively, poverty-oriented on the basis of the finding that through the FWP 40 per cent of the "at risk" families were helped.³¹ However, the Institute of Nutrition and Food Science, Dacca University, has found out in a follow-up survey that for FWP-families, nutritional intake was lower than non-FWP-families, and greater proportion of FWP-families

30. Shlomo Reutlinger and Marcelo Selowsky, "The Economic Dimensions of Malnutrition in Young Children", *Finance and Development*, June 1979, p. 22.

31. See Steve Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

were energy and protein deficient than non-FWP-families.³²

Another food and nutrition-based Basic Needs programme is the food rationing system. Of the several categories of beneficiaries of food rationing system, two categories are supposed to be the poor. One is the relief category including FWP programmes, which officially command 5 to 15 per cent of the total rationed grain. But in practice, the leakage is so big that the destitute get appreciably less than this.³³ The other is the Modified Ration System meant for rural areas. Roughly one-sixth of the total ration-off-take is allocated for this system. But official estimates suggest that only around 10 per cent of the off-take actually reaches the poor and destitutes.³⁴ In health and education programmes in Bangladesh, there is no legal barrier against the poor's availing them. But health services are mainly urban-biased automatically excluding a large proportion from its use. The education system is not functional and the poor people find it irrelevant and costly. However, two significant programmes deserve mention here. One is the Palli Chikitshak (Rural Doctor) programme and the other is nationwide literacy programme. Though impact of these

32. Institute of Nutrition and Food Science, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

33. See De Vylder, "Urban Bias in Development", *The Journal of Social Studies*, Dacca : Centre for Social Studies, No. 4. (July 1979), p. 10.

34. *Ibid.*

programmes are yet to be visible, it is expected that they will have favourable effects on health and education in rural Bangladesh.

3.2.3. National, Foreign and International Voluntary Organizations : The programme contents of a large member of national, foreign and international organizations operating in Bangladesh appear to be Basic needs-oriented. Among national organizations, the Gana Shyasthya Kendro (People's Health Centre) and the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) deserve special mention. Though they are operating at pilot or experimental level it appears that they have been able to create significant impact on the life of the poor. The former enters the community with health-programmes and the latter with mainly agriculture. But their approach is integrative and comprehensive social and economic development. Similarly, among the international organizations, the UNICEF enters the community through mothers and children but they purport to develop the total community to reach the services to their target groups. Several other local and foreign organizations are scattered throughout the country addressing to this or that, but primarily, basic needs issues. But, unfortunately their work and coverage is not well-planned and coordinated.

Thus, even if the country's development strategy is not basically tuned to Basic Needs, there is, at least, either stated policy or sporadic programmes oriented

to Basic Needs. What is required is a clear-cut shift of emphasis and gearing of resources to meeting Basic Needs.

3.3. Issues Relating to Basic Needs Approach in Bangladesh

It might be argued that shifting the gear of development strategy from conventional growth to BNA would negate the growth of other sectors like industry, and for that matter, agriculture, transport etc. But the apprehension is unfounded. Basic Needs Approach does not negate growth in other sectors. And here the relevance of the production framework as outlined in Section 2.4. earlier. The crux of the argument is that how much of Basic Needs goods and how much of non-basic goods are to be produced has to be decided first. The demands of the better-off classes should be met through production of basic and non-basic goods but at levels and types consistent with the bias for the poor in the over-all planning strategy. As to production of capital goods, incremental capital-output ratios should be evaluated in the framework of social objectives.

Then comes the question of resources. It may be argued that diverting resources for meeting Basic Needs goods would eat up all resources for development. Of course, if one wants to eradicate poverty and meet all Basic Needs at a time, the above argument holds. But if the target is to eradicate poverty within a reasonable time, it is not at all an ambitious programme.

As also found in Section 3.2. many of the development programmes envisage provision of Basic Needs but implementation-wise, the actual target remain far removed and resources are dissipated in meeting 'mediate' stages needs before the actual target is reached. To phrase otherwise, the super-structure becomes more important than the infra-structure and actual target. And this process is conveniently facilitated by lack of any internalised process of monitoring and evaluating of targets and achievements.

The alleged resource constraint can be eased greatly by two key words—'rationalisation' and 'coordination'. Development outlays, new allocation and re-allocation of resources have to be made on the basis of overall strategy and achievement. There must be accountability at every step. On the other hand, duplicity of efforts and programmes have to be avoided. The author emphasises this point because it has been observed that while a number of agencies—government, private, local and international are engaged in the same field in a particular geographical area or same socio-economic groups, others remain beyond the periphery of any such agencies. What is required is an exhaustive inventory of all such agencies, their distribution, programmes and resources for subsequent well-coordinated coverage of all or as far as possible areas and population groups. A well-coordinated approach might go a long way in meeting the Basic Needs of the country.

An added advantage is the bias of the foreign and international bodies towards meeting Basic Needs of the

people. The World Bank itself, in particular, is propounding the cause of BNA. Thus, a shift of government policy to Basic Needs Approach would just augment and smoothen channelling resources of such international bodies in meeting Basic Needs.

Finally, the issue of mobilization of public opinion, political will and participation of the beneficiaries in the programmes. In fact, all three would score plus points so far to Basic Needs Approach would be concerned. Alleviating mass-poverty and meeting Basic Needs are politically more appealing. And in developing countries, there has always been a political clamour for this or that variant of Basic Needs Approach. So, it would be a test of political will of the Government or the party in power if the development strategy is formally geared to BNA.

As to participation in development works, basic needs-oriented programmes will command more participation than others that might appear to benefit the richer sections of the community. The poor would be enticed to participate seeing the prospects of their own benefits.

IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

4.1. Conclusions

From the discussion it should be evident that meeting basic needs is quite feasible within the framework of the mixed-economy, as is the case with Bangladesh. Adopting Basic Needs Approach would be tantamount to shifting the priority of the socio-economic

objectives and seeing through its actual implementation by gearing the physical, financial and administrative resources of the country to it. An additional point is the organization aspect. Empirically the voluntary organizations are more effective in meeting Basic Needs than bureaucratic ones. And since re-organization and re-orientation of the government machinery to meeting Basic Needs would take some time, the government might tap these organizational resources for meeting Basic needs. This would ease the burden on government exchequer as well.

4.2. Further Research

The paper has, in fact, raised more issues than it has answered. The author feels that there is a considerable research gap in the field. Also lack of relevant data is tremendous to handicap such research. For example, there is no comprehensive and realistic Cost of Living Index in Bangladesh.³⁵ The bundle of minimum goods and services that is required for bare subsistence has to be identified for determining the poverty line. Similarly, internal monitoring system should be reorganized for performance test of the Basic Needs programmes. In fact, quantitative methods may be misleading in monitoring and assessing people's attitude, perception and reaction to Basic Needs Programme. Whether anthropo-

35. The Cost of Living index available with Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics is based on select bundle of goods consumed by select socio-economic groups (Government employees, industrial works) in 2 metropolitan cities and 2 industrial cities of Bangladesh.

logical method would be suitable is again an empirical question. Again, in view of resource constraint, the critical sectors of Basic Needs have to be attacked first. This requires identification of the sectoral linkages which are very much conditioned by existing economic, political, social and cultural situation.



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