

Poverty Profile of Five Wards under Muhammadpur Union in Bangladesh

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Abstract

There is a system to monitor poverty at the national level in Bangladesh but the initiative to monitor poverty at local level is missing. The Local Level Poverty Monitoring System (LLPMS) aims to address this gap with a view of knowing the poverty situation in the respective areas for taking corrective action by the local government. In this connection, LLPMS was implemented in five Wards has been completed.

The survey findings suggest that the family size of all wards is higher than the national average. The adult literacy varies from 38 percent to 66 percent from one Ward to another. The net enrollment rate at primary level is quite satisfactory that varies from 78 percent to 91 percent. In case of variation of primary enrollment in different Wards, it is found that demand factor is more responsible than the supply factor. The coverage of electricity is higher than the national average. On an average, 53 percent of the people are living below the poverty line, which is higher than the average picture of other rural areas in Bangladesh. Per month per household income is lower than the national average but it is higher than the other rural areas in the country. This implies that the inequality in these villages is higher than the other rural areas in Bangladesh. The people of the

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areas are found to be very much deprived of access to safe drinking water as most of them are drinking arsenic contaminated water. There is variation of performances in every indicator at Ward level but the aggregate performance of the indicators is satisfactory. This justifies the data desegregation at Ward level. Data desegregation on the basis of social stratification also provides some policy implication. Finally, the use of Natural Resource Database (NRDB) for presentation of poverty situation is very much helpful for the policy planner to grasp the problem. It would also help to make local government transparent and accountable.

Introduction

Poverty is a condition of deprivation brought about by various factors. It is complex and has many dimensions. Because of this complexity, it is difficult to single out the cause of poverty and determine one single indicator for monitoring poverty in rural areas. In Bangladesh, 44 percent of the people in rural areas are living below the poverty line while 20 percent are hard-core poor.

While Bangladesh has achieved remarkable results in reducing human poverty in terms of increasing the adult literacy rate, closing the gender gap in education, increasing life expectancy, reducing maternal and infant mortality rates and intensifying the coverage of the Expanded Programme of Immunization (EPI), among others, it has, however, performed quite modestly in reducing income-related poverty such as the lack of employment opportunity, lack of ownership in productive assets, lack of the capacity to cope with adverse effects of natural calamities, and overpopulation. Although the latter have been identified as the main cause of poverty in Bangladesh, the reality nevertheless is that the causes of poverty differ from one region to another and lack of understanding about the causes in a particular place makes it difficult to take realistic steps in reducing poverty.

In Bangladesh, Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) is being conducted every four years to monitor the poverty situation in rural and urban areas. The findings of the survey help provide a picture of the country-level and determine policy

interventions at the macro level. But because the poverty situation differs from one village to another and even within a district, service delivery agencies, especially the local government authority, face difficulties in taking proper steps due to lack of reliable data at the grassroots level. An initiative was taken to develop a user-friendly poverty monitoring system at the Union level known as the Local Level Poverty Monitoring System (LLPMS). The initiative was launched on a pilot basis in four villages of a Ward under the MIMAP-Bangladesh Project in 2002 to 2003. After the pilot's successful completion, the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) is now implementing the system in the Muhammadpur (west) Union of Daudkandi Upazila, Comilla covering all the villages. The project is under the auspices of International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada through the CBMS International Network.

The objectives of this paper are to describe the background and methodology of the LLPMS as well as to present and analyze the findings of the survey conducted in the five wards of the Union of Daudkandi Upazila, Comilla. At the same time, it aims to present the lessons gained from the LLPMS.

Methodology of the project

Local-level people were trained and involved in the Project under the supervision of the functionaries of the local government in the generation of community- and household-level information. Two sets of questionnaire/checklist were designed to generate the information. Aside from the collection of information, local people were also recruited and trained to do the tabulation of some of the core indicators in the LLPMS. To compile the basic information of each household and to aggregate information of some basic indicators, each ward was made to prepare a Ward Information Book (WIB). After the information were gathered and tabulated/compiled, they were presented in a training workshop where the functionaries of the local government and the elite people of each of the Wards were invited to analyze the information and to identify and prioritize problems in

various fields with the view of preparing a pragmatic plan. After the plan had been prepared, meetings were organized in each Ward to disseminate the findings of the survey and the plan. The plan was then finalized and the functionaries of local government prioritized the problem and identified a plan of action based on their resources, with hopes of getting support from the nation-building departments. Finally, a planning workshop was organized in the presence of the officials of nation-building departments and non-government organizations (NGOs) in order to solicit their commitment for support.

Findings of the survey

Household and population characteristic

The total number of households in the five wards is 1,956 while the total number of population is 10,972, making the average household size as 6 (Table 1). The sex ratio (number of male against per hundred females) is 108. The average household size and sex ratio of the studied areas are higher than the national average.

In terms of religion, 87 percent of the households are Muslim while the rest belong to the Hindu religion. Male heads constitute more than 98 percent of the household heads while female heads are only 1.6 percent.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the five Wards

Household and Population Characteristics	
Number of households	1,956
Sex of household heads (% of total households)	
Male	98.4
Female	1.6
Number of population	10,972
Male	5,707
Female	5,265
Average household size	5.6
Sex ratio (males per 100 females)	108
Religious Status (in %)	
Muslim families	87.3
Hindu families	12.7

With regard to the age structure of the population, the highest concentration is in the 15 to 49 years old age group. Dependency ratio for both sexes is 68 percent; 66 percent for male and 69 percent for female (Table 2). The average dependency ratio is lower than the national average, suggesting a lower dependency burden in the study area. Nearly two-fifths of the population also belong to the age group of 0-14 years old thereby ensuring a stable growth of school-aged children and working people in the coming years.

Education

Education helps to explore the potentials of a person as well as to develop his capacity and moral character. The state is responsible for ensuring free primary education to all. As such, monitoring the educational status of the population is very important.

The adult literacy rate in the five Wards is recorded at around 53 percent as shown in Table 3. The literacy rate of the people aged 7 years old and above is 49 percent. Females are lagging behind the males in both cases. Although the area's literacy rate is lower than the national average, it is higher than that of other rural areas in Bangladesh.

The net enrollment rate at the primary and secondary levels are 83 percent and 37 percent, respectively, while the dropout rate for the same levels stands at 2 and 9 percent, respectively. Females are in

Table 2. Population age structure of the five Wards

Age Groups (years)	Male	Female	Both Sex
0-4	9.48	11.62	10.51
5-9	11.79	12.63	12.19
10-14	13.68	13.69	13.69
15-49	52.08	51.36	51.73
50-64	8.32	7.65	8.00
65 and above	4.64	3.02	3.86
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00
Demographic dependency ratio	65.56	69.42	67.39

Table 3. Educational status of the five Wards

	Male	Female	Total
Net enrollment rate (Primary)	82.87	83.64	83.25
Net enrollment rate (Secondary)	30.67	41.95	36.19
Drop out rate (Primary)	3.08	1.37	2.25
Drop out rate (Secondary)	11.41	7.31	9.09
Literacy rate (7 years and above)	52.96	43.68	48.60
Adult literacy rate (15 years and above)	59.61	45.28	52.95

Source: LLPMS Survey

a more advantageous position than males since enrollment rate of girls is higher while the dropout rate is lower than the boys. It is to be noted that there are five primary schools in the five Wards but no secondary school in any. The main problem in primary education lies with the demand factor while for the secondary education, it is supply. Because there are sufficient physical facilities for primary education in these Wards, people utilize them by sending their children to schools. On the other hand, in the secondary education level, there is a need for school to be established although an initiative to this effect has already been noted. Field observation suggests that poor parents deem it more profitable to involve their children in work rather than to send them to school. In this regard, the government initiative for increasing female education seems to have a positive impact on increasing the enrollment rate of females at the secondary level. Primary education is free for all in Bangladesh while the secondary education is free for females. In addition, girls at secondary level are provided with stipend. And because there is little opportunity for the girls to be involved in paid labor, parents feel it would be better to send their girls to school.

Health and family planning

A healthy person is a resource for the economy while a sick person is a burden for the family, society and nation. Healthy life depends on

the availability of health-related support services for the society and a positive attitude towards the use of these facilities. Health related support services raise life expectancy at birth by reducing infant mortality, maternal mortality and morbidity. A healthy environment in the rural areas related to the use of hygienic latrine and safe drinking water is a prerequisite for reducing morbidity. Because the measurement of life expectancy at birth is difficult, some proxy indicators that have a direct or indirect relation with life expectancy are considered and presented in Table 4.

The infant and maternal mortality rates of the studied Ward are 14 and 3, respectively, per thousand live births, lower than the national averages implying that the people of these Wards enjoy better maternal and child care facilities than those at the national level. The danger remains with the delivery practices for newborn babies. Only 26 percent of the newborn babies were born under the supervision of doctors or trained birth attendants.

In terms of water and toilet facilities, more than two thirds of households use ring slab or sanitary latrines. People use tubewell water for drinking but arsenic contamination has created a health hazard for the people in this area. As a result, only 15 percent of the population enjoy safe drinking water. The situation of this Union with respect to access to safe drinking water is quite different from other areas in Bangladesh because of the issue of arsenic contamination in

Table 4. Health and family planning status of the five Wards

Infant mortality rate (per thousand live births)	14.37
Maternal mortality rate (per thousand live births)	2.87
Contraceptive prevalence rate (%)	48.45
Use of sanitary latrine (%)	67.66
Use of safe drinking water (%)	15.00
Babies born under the supervision of trained birth attendant or in health centre	25.86

Source: LLPMS Survey

drinking water that has recently become a severe health hazard in some regions of the country. The surveyed area is one of the most severely affected with this problem. In view of this, the government has provided some arsenic-free tubewells in different areas through the Union Parishad. This, however, made people so used to just collecting drinking water from the doorsteps that often go out of order frequently. These, therefore, become reasons for the poor access by the residents to safe drinking water.

The average contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR), meanwhile, is recorded at 49 percent. Health workers reported that people's religious beliefs against the use of contraceptives is one of the reasons for the low CPR rate.

Apart from the poor access to safe drinking water, other areas of the health sector in the site are satisfactory. There is a Union Health Center and the Upazila Health Complex at a close distance, along with a private diagnostic center at the local market for getting health services. People generally consult with the village doctor or pharmacist in case of ordinary diseases but they usually go to the Upazila Health Complex for complicated diseases.

Income poverty

Income poverty is a situation/condition wherein people fail to meet their minimum basic needs due to lack of purchasing power resulting from the inability to earn sufficient income. Three methods are used in measuring poverty, namely: cost of basic need (CBN), self perception, and villagers' perception method. The first method measures the ability to purchase a fixed bundle of food and non-food items to meet minimum consumption requirements or the poverty line. Under the second method, the household heads categorize themselves into four categories, i.e., occasional deficit, chronic deficit, break-even and surplus, on the basis of their ability to meet the food requirement. The households that identified themselves as chronic deficit and occasional deficit are considered as poor and the households that identified themselves as break-even or surplus are

considered as non-poor. For the third method, villagers have their own perception in classifying people as poor and non-poor. During the survey, all households were categorized accordingly as poor, very poor and non-poor after the identification of each of the households on the basis of the fixed criteria.

The incidence of poverty using the CBN method is recorded at 52.2 percent, which is higher than the national average (Table 5). The incidence of poverty, however, is lower at 32 percent if definition of poverty considered is food intake. Thirty-two percent of families are said to have problems in meeting their food requirements occasionally or constantly.

Dependency on one's own physical labor, inability to meet sufficient food requirements of family members, less number of earning members in relation to the number of family members, inability to cope with the crisis arising due to natural disaster and lean season, inability to give treatment and continue the children's education due to lack of income, and absence of land ownership by households are considered as main criteria in assessing poverty.

Asset ownership and living condition

In an agrarian society like Bangladesh, ownership of land particularly cultivated land and ponds as well as ownership of bovine animal is referred to as productive assets since these assets are prerequisites in productive activities. Nearly two-thirds of the household heads depend on nonfarm activities for their livelihood. Still, people believe that ownership of cultivable land is the most productive asset in rural

Table 5. Income poverty scenario of the five Wards

	Poor	Nonpoor
Cost of basic need method (CBN)	52.2	47.8
Self-perception method	31.7	68.3

Source: LLPMS Survey

areas. Although, there is lot of scope in earning for skilled people in the era of globalization, lack of modern technical know-how, lack of money and traditional mentality inhibit ones getting involved in non-farm activities profitably.

The average owned and operated land per holding, as shown in Table 6, are 0.85 and 0.76 acres, respectively, suggesting that the land holding size is lower than the national average. Although 64 percent of the households own ponds, the average size is very small at 0.09 acres since most of the ponds are owned jointly. Seventy percent of households rear poultry with the average number of poultry at 6.37. In the case of livestock rearing, only 25 percent of the households own cows and 12 percent own goat. Again, the result suggests that ownership of land and bovine animal is less than the national average. The area is situated near the capital city so the population density is high compared to other rural areas in Bangladesh. Scarcity of homestead area, lack of grazing lands and floods are the main reasons for the lack of interest to rear cattle. Some of the entrepreneurs though are involved in poultry farming commercially and fish culture through leases of ponds in the area.

Table 6. Assets ownership of the five Wards

Average-owned land per households (acre)	0.85
Average-operated land (acres)	0.76
Percentage of households having ownership in ponds	64.00
Average area of ponds per households	0.09
Percentage of households having poultry	76.00
Average number of poultry	6.37
Percentage of households having ox	6.56
Average number of oxen	1.25
Percentage of households having cows	25.00
Average number of cows	1.72
Percentage of households having goats	11.81
Average number of goats	1.47

Source: LLPMS Survey

Living condition

The living condition of people is the most important indicator in knowing the well-being of the people. Housing condition, together with other facilities, is considered as part of living condition.

As gleaned in Table 7, most of the houses (98.6%) are made of corrugated iron (CI) sheet or pucca so it is difficult to identify the poor and nonpoor by observing housing condition. With micro finance being pushed by the government and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) as a strategy for fighting against poverty, some NGOs, including Grameen Bank, are providing housing loans for building houses. These financing facilities have created the opportunity for people to build good houses in the rural areas. Inflow of remittances from those working outside the area was also found to be a reason for the good housing condition in these Wards inasmuch as remittance earner gives emphasis on building a good house for social prestige. Meanwhile, more than 53 households have electricity although people are dissatisfied with the frequent load shedding. The most significant point is that 5 percent of the households in these areas have mobile phones being used personally or commercially. The mobile phone has brought a revolution in the communication sector in the rural areas of Bangladesh. Grameen Phone, a sister company of Grameen Bank, is the main initiator for introducing the mobile phone at the grassroots level. People said that this facility has been able to make life easier and anxiety-free.

Table 7. Living conditions of the five Wards

Percentage of households having houses made of CI sheet or pucca building	98.60
Percentage of households having electricity	52.80
Having tape recorder or radio	28.00
Having television	21.53
Having mobile telephone	5.11

Source: LLPMS Survey

Employment and income

The broadening of employment opportunities in the rural areas has a direct relationship with a rise in income which eventually helps to reduce poverty. The incremental increase of population and the reduction of per capita cultivable lands due to an increase in the use of lands for homestead purpose inhibit the profitable employment of the labor force in rural areas. Thus, to increase the employment opportunities especially in rural areas, the other possible opportunities in the nonfarm sector need to be explored by capitalizing on the information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Labor force participation rate is recorded at 68 percent while the average number of active labor force is 1.37 (Table 8). The unemployment rate is found to be very high while the underemployment rate is a little higher than the national average. Considering the gender factor, it is observed that the variation in the unemployment and underemployment rates for males is very minimal while for females the rate is much higher. The problem may lie with the definition of underemployment and unemployment rate. In the study areas, the females are mostly involved in household work apart from poultry raising, livestock rearing, threshing, and drying of rice during harvesting period. Unfortunately, household work was not considered as an economic activity. Thus, this may be one of the reasons for the higher unemployment and underemployment rates for females.

Table 8. Employment and income status of the five Wards

	Male	Female	Both Sex
Labour force participation rate	80.06	55.16	67.98
Average number of active labor per household	1.56	1.18	1.37
Unemployment rate	6.72	46.55	21.83
Under employment rate	7.67	40.19	20.02
Child Labour (%)	3.43	0.19	1.54
Per household per month average income	Tk. 4,947		
Per household per month average expenditure	Tk. 4,179		

Source: LLPMS Survey

Meanwhile, nearly 2 percent of the children (6-14 years old) are supplementing their family income by selling their physical labor. Poverty is the main reason for child labor.

With regard to the incidence of poverty, although per household income is higher than other rural areas in Bangladesh, the incidence of poverty recorded is higher. This suggests that inequality between the rich and poor people in the study areas is higher than other rural areas in Bangladesh.

Selected poverty profile

Gender and poverty

In the rural areas in Bangladesh, there is little scope to be employed in gainful activities for a woman. Around three fifths of the female-headed households are poor compared to that of nearly one half for the male-headed households.

Educational qualification of the household head and poverty

Education has a positive impact on poverty alleviation. It is commonly believed that an educated person is able to cope with the abnormal situation by utilizing his or her capacity. The study findings confirm this hypothesis as seen in Table 9.

Table 9. Education and poverty of household heads of the five Wards

	Poor (%)	Nonpoor (%)	Total
Illiterate	62.64	37.72	50.41
Primary	14.42	14.75	14.58
Secondary	16.75	22.13	19.39
SSC	4.26	11.49	7.81
HSc	1.52	9.27	5.33
Graduate	0.20	3.58	1.86
Masters	0.20	0.84	0.52
Others	0.00	0.21	0.10
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: LLPMS Survey

Among the poor, 63 percent of the households are illiterate while only 38 percent are illiterate among nonpoor household heads. The incidence of poverty declines as the heads' educational qualifications increase.

Land ownership and poverty

Land is considered as a productive asset in the rural areas and ownership of land is considered a vital point in monitoring rural poverty in Bangladesh.

Table 10 shows that among the poor, 72 percent of households are landless. Poverty declines as the land holding size increases. However, it should be noted that nearly half of the total nonpoor are landless which means that land ownership is not the only factor that can classify people as poor or nonpoor. There are lots of opportunities to be involved in non-farm activities for the landless in rural areas but experience suggests that the flourishing of all other sectors in the rural areas depends on the growth of the agricultural sector.

Age of the household head and poverty

Age of the household head has a positive relationship with poverty reduction. Generally, it is observed that household heads at the early stage of their life cycle are affected by poverty. The burden of poverty continues to decline as the age of the household head increases following the increase in the number of household members who are earning.

Table 10. Land ownership and poverty of the five wards (in percent)

	Poor	Nonpoor	Total
Landless	71.9	42.9	57.7
Marginal	20.8	28.5	24.6
Small Farmer	4.9	16.0	10.4
Medium Farmer	2.4	11.7	6.9
Large Farmer	0.1	0.8	0.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: LLPMS Survey

Among the poor, more than 55 percent of the household heads belong to the age group under 40 years old while the percentage is 43 for the same ages in nonpoor households. Thirty-two percent of the non-poor household heads belong to the age group of 50 years old and above. The mean age of the poor and nonpoor household heads is registered at 43 and 47 years old, respectively (Table 11).

Profession and poverty

Household heads as service holders and businessmen are in a better position than household heads involved in other professions. It is observed that nearly three fourths of the service holders and three fifths of businessmen are nonpoor. However, among the laborer household heads, rickshaw pullers are severely affected by poverty (Table 12).

Utility of the system: perception of different stakeholders

How do the various stakeholders view the use of the LLPMS? The following are some of perceptions given.

- The local government authority has prioritized the problems in the fields of education, health, infrastructure development, building economic institutions, agriculture development and gender development at the grassroots

Table 11. Age of the household heads and poverty

Age of the household heads	Poor (in %)	Nonpoor (in %)	Total (in %)
<30	18.0	16.0	17.0
30-40	37.1	26.9	32.1
40-50	23.5	24.9	24.2
50 and highest	21.4	32.2	26.7
	100.0	100.0	100.0
Mean age of household head	42.9	46.11	44.47

Source: LLPMS Survey

Table 12. Profession and poverty

	Poor	Nonpoor	Total
Farmer (crop)	59.91	40.09	100.00
Labourer	74.49	25.51	100.00
Fisherman	75.00	25.00	100.00
Service	25.84	74.16	100.00
Business	39.57	60.43	100.00
Rickshaw puller	75.15	24.85	100.00
Professional	43.62	56.38	100.00
Others	42.51	57.49	100.00

Source: LLPMS Survey

level with the use of the system. In the absence of additional funds for implementing the plan, emphasis has been given on the proper utilization of existing resources. For example, a road was constructed in a backward village as per plan of the Union Parishad. According to the confession of the late Chairman of the Union Parishad, they usually give emphasis on the localities of their supporters to make them happy. But during the planning workshop, he identified that some areas were not getting due priority in gaining resources because the inhabitants belong to the opponent party.

- The officials of nation-building departments committed to provide arsenic-free tubewell in a Ward meeting to Ward number 05 on a priority basis as the problem is more severe in this Ward than in other Wards.
- One of the policy planners underscored the necessity of the LLPMS. According to his comment, this system will ensure the accountability and transparency of local government. Preparing a database at the Upazila level covering all unions would be helpful for the system's wider replication. This system would be helpful to identify area specific problems and to respond to their needs.

- People said that the information generated through LLPMS are new to them. They tried to organize themselves for strengthening social capital and to take necessary action for combating poverty.
- During the planning workshop, officials of nation-building departments stressed the importance of giving a special amount to the Union Parishad for implementing their plan on an experimental basis in order to help develop a model for replication all over the country.
- Some teachers appreciated the importance of poverty monitoring and showed their interest to get involved in the process. According to them, students can be mobilized for data generation if they are involved in the process.
- Functionaries of neighboring Union Parishad showed their interest in the LLPMS and requested to expand the program to the neighboring Union Parishad of Muhammadpur Union.
- Representative of the National Statistics Department (NSD) said that if the process could be done properly, it would be helpful in complementing the national initiative. They also showed their interest to get involved in the process during the initial workshop organized for getting feedback.

Learning from LLPMS

In terms of lessons gained, the following may be listed:

- The functionaries of Union Parishad are in a position to coordinate the implementation of the LLPMS. Expertise support for collecting and tabulating data from the local people is essential for carrying out the activities of poverty monitoring. Training should be an integral part of LLPMS.
- The various nation-building departments can be involved in providing specialized services related to data collection and tabulation for the system's sustainability. During the

initial workshop, national level agencies showed their interest to be involved in the process.

- Encouraging the formation of village/Ward organizations through the participation of the people in all categories by the functionaries of local government would facilitate the wider use of data generated through the LLPMS. Some of the leaders of village organizations noted that they would be able to undertake some projects for the development of the areas from the profits of mutual undertakings.
- Presenting indicators of survey area by comparing them with national indicators using NRDB software is helpful to sensitize the policy planner.
- Information dissemination by the functionaries of the local government has an impact in mobilizing the people. The functionaries of Union Parishad are able to prepare the plan by reflecting the collected information if they are trained.
- The indicators should be very simple and short to be able to attract people in the poverty monitoring system.
- Preparation of the Information Book incorporating some essential information of each household is helpful to ensure quality of data. During the training workshop and Ward meeting, the Information Book was kept open to check the information of encouraged villagers. Because the investigators become very serious in data collection, this would help increase the reliability of information collected.

In the future, two things are essential for sustaining the activity. One is the arrangement of training and the second is the management of funds for the field investigators. The functionaries of the Union Parishad said that voluntary involvement of the local people is useful but the quality of the survey may suffer because the locals normally do not have the expertise and proper training. In that case, cost-sharing may be one of the ways for continuing the process. They also agreed that soon after their public examination, students remain idle for three

to four months. In that period, they may be used for data collection at a very minimum cost. There is a plan to allocate a portion of funds to the local government directly by the central government. In that case, a system could be developed to allocate a portion of funds for poverty monitoring. The issue of involving students during their period of free time may be experimented by giving a portion of fund from the CBMS to another Union Parishad.

Conclusion

Poverty monitoring at the local level through the involvement of local people and local government proved its worth in Bangladesh based on the experience on the implementation of the LLPMS. Different stakeholders of the project have given positive feedback on the outcome of the project. There is, however, a need to develop a sense of ownership among the people on the data generated through the dissemination of information and assurance that the data will be used for planning purpose. Local people also proved that with proper training, they can do the data collection and partial tabulation of some core indicators. Initiatives from the local government to continue the process, cooperation from the educated young local people and expertise support for orienting data collection and tabulation of some indicators will thus ensure the system's sustainability.

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Comments

- The analysis and explanation of the application of data was better than just simply describing the data. As such, the data may be better interpreted and the results better explained in terms of the purpose of the study.
- Under the qualitative approach, the paper raised very important issues especially on the perception of the interviewee regarding poverty—how do households define poverty? The paper describes 3 ways to identify poverty: basic needs of households, self-perception of households and village perception. The paper should go into detail to describe what households mean by basic needs, and what self-sufficient poverty and village perception mean.
- Paper should specify and describe what the PRA techniques used in the study were.
- With regard to policy application—the paper describes what activity is going on in the grassroots level. If the paper has a better explanation of the methodology and better analysis of the results, it will be easy to convince policymakers on how to adopt the policy.
- Employment and education data should be disaggregated by gender since gender is important in differential opportunity for education and employment in Bangladesh.
- Provide details on how the numbers for the mortality rate were gathered since they are very difficult to get.
- Provide information on whether the study questionnaire is comparable or not to the national questionnaire.
- The poverty rate using self-perception method is so much lower than the basic needs method. The reason(s) behind this should be explained.