

Final Report

**Evaluation of
APPEAL Supported DAM CLCs
and
The Impact on the Life of the Beneficiaries**

**Prepared for
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization**

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Acronyms

APPEAL	Asia and Pacific Program for Education for All
ASA	Association for Social Advancement
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CBA	Center-based Approach
CLC	Community Learning Centers
CMC	Center Management Committee
CMES	Center for Mass Education on Science
CRC	Community Resource Center
CW	Community Worker
DAE	Department of Agricultural Extension
DAM	Dhaka Ahsania Mission
DLS	Department of Livestock Services
DNFE	Department of Non-formal Education
DOF	Department of Fisheries
DSW	Department of Social Welfare
DYD	Department of Youth and Sports
FIVDB	Friends in Village Development, Bangladesh
FREPD	Foundation for Research on Educational Planning and Development
GAD	Gender and Development
GK	Ganokendra
GO	Government Organization
IGA	Income Generating Activity
IGP	Income Generation Program
NFE	Non-formal Education
NGO	Non-government Organization
PLCE	Post-literacy and Continuing Education
PROAP	Principal Regional Office in Asia Pacific
PTG	Primary Group Member
STG	Secondary Group Member
Tk	Taka
TLM	Total Literacy Movement
UCEP	Under-privileged Children's Education Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Executive Summary

**Evaluation of
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With the experience of community based development interventions with education and small village libraries that turned into village learning and community action centers known as *Ganokendra* (GK), the Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) undertook the Community Learning Center (CLC) project for the period 1998 – 2001 (three years). UNESCO PROAP provided the financial support for the project within the framework of APPEAL and with funding assistance from Japan and Norway. The 45 CLCs established at Raipura (Narsinghdi, Bangladesh) under the project were in fact similar to DAM's GKs with wider facilities for providing lifelong learning, training on income generating activities and organizing socio-cultural programs. Of the 45 CLCs, 17 were later closed and 10 new ones of the same model were created at Jhenidah. The present study evaluates the impact of these CLCs at Raipura and Jhenidah on the life of the beneficiaries through review of literature (mainly evaluation reports and project documents), discussion with CLC project staff and DAM officials, selected CLC members and representatives of local community, and a questionnaire-based sample survey of CLC project beneficiaries.

The present report has **five main chapters**. The first chapter reviews the CLC project proposal and the following one reviews performance of DAM's GKs which form the basis for CLCs. The next chapter presents an abridged summary of a recent CLC impact evaluation report highlighting especially, the CLC objectives vis-à-vis the performance of CLCs, the operations and management of CLCs and the limitations of CLCs, the impact of CLCs, and the suggestions relating to improvements in CLC operations and the efficiency and impact. The fourth chapter addresses the CLC impact issues through a fresh round of study of documents and reports, field visits, questionnaire-based sample survey, case studies and discussions at grassroots level, as well as at the central level. Finally, the fifth chapter draws the conclusions.

The main objective of the present study was to assess the impact of the CLC project on the life of the beneficiaries. The evaluation, however, concentrated more on the effects of the project since only a short time had elapsed after the scheduled period of implementation of the APPEAL supported CLC project and theoretically, it is too early to have any assessable impact. For the purpose of the present study CLCs were looked at as functional units that use inputs (e.g., money, material, expertise) and deliver outputs (e.g., physical infrastructure of CLCs, CLC members with increased literacy and better livelihood skills, quality training on activities that are locally useful, micro-credit) that create effects or program benefits (such as increase in the level of literacy of the beneficiaries and their skills in livelihood trades, increase in their ability to participate in community development activities and in their consciousness about the society and environment, enhancement of their income, increase in adopting family planning practices, elevation of the status of CLC members in their families and communities) having sustainable impact.

The executives at the DAM headquarters claim that CLCs perform multidimensional activities addressed to the needs and for the benefits of CLC members and the communities they live in. The official DAM documents on activity plans for CLCs show that most planned activities and programs relate to development of the CLC structure, including its physical capacities and to capacity development for management and operations of CLCs. Also, according to the DAM official records, CLCs have performed apparently well in terms of the stated activity plans for the three years of the project.

The present study finds that CLCs are successful in a sense that the people in the CLC operation areas accept the CLC as a special type of institution for non-formal education and life skills training. This institution is generally recognized as a useful meeting place for the neo-literate CLCs members, as well as for the interested members of the local public, where they can read newspapers, discuss matters relating to various issues of family and community life, develop their awareness about human rights, family planning, healthcare and environment, get some training on skills required for income generating activities and receive inoculation and agriculture extension services.

The impact of CLCs at the beneficiary and community level, however, is not as extensive as might often be portrayed by DAM officials, who in fact, believe that there are many constraints and limitations in CLC operations and the performance could be improved much for having a broader and deeper impact. The findings of a recent report, following which the present study was undertaken revealed that the CLC continuing education program failed by 100% in Jhenidah and by 50% in Narsinghdi, the adult education program failed by 50% in Jhenidah and the cultural program and program on income generation activities failed in Narsinghdi by 17%. The reasons for failure, as stated in the report were women members leaving the CLCs due to change of their addresses after marriage, elderly people prohibiting women in attending CLCs under religious considerations, problems of female members in working together with their male counterparts, misuse of money, and difficulty in making time because of household and other workload. The report further noted that the impact of CLC programs on gender equity, poverty alleviation and environment conservation had been marginal and CLCs were not successful in motivating local people in taking their children to schools.

The report indicated that the CLCs could enhance the status of the members in their families and communities and also (a) increased community awareness on the importance of education, the scope for literacy practice and for acquiring life skills, awareness about health and sanitation, environment and the rights of the women and their participation in community activities; (b) contributed to capacity building of the women in decision making; (c) operated as forums where people learn by doing; and (d) developed the capacity of CLC members to enjoy a better life.

The present study reveals that the field realities are not much different from what had been portrayed in the preceding study. Two major limitations of the CLCs are their poor physical set up and shortage of reading/learning materials and the facilities for games, sports and entertainment in them. Not all CLCs provide training in all types of life skill training that are locally useful and in many cases CLCs suffer from poor management, supervision and monitoring. CLC community workers are loaded with many responsibilities and they often find it difficult to allocate time and energy to effectively discharge all of them. CLCs do not have adequate fund for providing the micro-credit support to members who require it for income generating activities. The achievements of CLCs are limited largely because of the poor participation of members in CLC activities. The number of CLC members who are regular in taking part in CLC activities and programs is approximately 20–25%.

Notwithstanding the limitations, CLC members who are regular in taking part in CLC activities and programs are benefited from them in many ways. The impact of CLCs is fairly impressive on the life of these CLC members.

Thanks to regular participation in the CLC literacy and NFE program about one-third of them could attain a literacy level of grade A (grade V) in three years, which in a regular primary school would take five to seven years. About one-third of the members had attained a literacy level of grade B (IV). With the literacy level they attained the members are now capable of reading,

writing and counting, managing household accounts and even the accounts of the small businesses they undertake. Further, with literacy and increased awareness about the society and the environment, they take better care of the family and children, enjoy a better status in the family and the community and are eligible for taking more meaningful role in the decision-making process at both levels.

CLC activities do have relevance to the personal, family and social life of the members. Their participation in training on income generating skills and quality of life has a contribution to an increase in their monthly income, as well as in their position in the family and the community. About 60% of the regular CLC members now have their monthly income increased by an amount up to Tk 1000 as compared to their monthly income before they joined CLCs. The monthly income of 30% of them increased by an amount between Tk 1001 and 1500 and of 10% of them between Tk 1501 and 2000. The most useful among the areas of livelihood training to CLC members are growing vegetables, poultry, nursery, sewing and livestock rearing.

CLC members are of the opinion that this innovative DAM institution operates well as a center for development of community awareness. The regular CLC members find it useful to attend CLC training on quality of life (social awareness, men-women relationship, environment conservation and leadership development) and the various issue-based discussions. Also the local communities are benefited from CLC activities such as campaign on awareness about consequences of early marriage and dowry, training on healthcare and sanitation, inoculation and agricultural extension services, and cultural programs. CLC members believe that CLC activities enhance community consciousness and social integrity and develop confidence of the CLC members, as well as of the members of the community in their capacity to solve many problems through discussion and mutual cooperation. The CLCs therefore, are not just meeting places. To members who are regular in participating in CLC activities, CLCs are agents of community development.

That a large majority of the CLC members are not regular in taking part in CLC activities only demonstrate that the CLCs are not very successful in becoming institutions for which the general members have a feeling of ownership. Neither the members of the local communities have the ownership feeling, since both CLC members and the non-member local people are reluctant in contribution to funding CLC activities. In many places CLC members, as well as the members of the local public have a feeling that paying to CLC is not worth the services they offer, CLCs do not provide adequate credit support for IGA and entrepreneurship, and the absence of early childhood care and education program is a problem. Flow of information materials in CLCs is irregular and also, in many places the members of the CLC management committees are not regular in attending monthly meetings.

CLCs have little effect in terms of development of management capacity of the local people. CLC members consider that the leadership development training has some usefulness to them and the issue-based discussions also contribute indirectly to development of their management capability, but ultimately, the CLC members live individually, do not undertake initiatives with mass involvement, and do not run big or even medium enterprises. This virtually restricts CLC members in their practice of discharging management responsibility. Only on rare occasions, CLC members demonstrate some ability in settling disputes or organizing community participation in cultural programs or tree plantation. So far, CLC members could not come up as an organized force that could take initiative in social movements (for example, against drug addiction, child and women trafficking, terrorism or for establishment of human rights), collectively facing natural calamities or organizing rehabilitation programs. At personal level,

however, CLC women members could develop some capacity in managing household affairs and decision-making and change attitude towards life.

The CLC project under review is a small one and operates within a small area. Even with its present scale it could have impact at district or regional level if it achieved outstanding success and participated by all target beneficiaries. The project could establish some linkages with local/district level government agencies, local branches of some regional/national NGOs and a few local NGOs. But the linkages are not institutionalized and none of the partners have any policy or plan of action in the cooperation. In view of some recent developments in the attitude of government towards GO-NGO or public-private partnership and thanks to personal initiatives of some CLC community workers or supervisors, CLCs can now arrange some training programs with the help of government agencies (such as DYD, DLS, DAE, DOF), operate as venues for delivery of agriculture extension, inoculation or family planning services. The impact of these services is left 'virtually to chances, adhocism and voluntarism'.

As of today, there is no formal coordination/interaction at the district level among government offices of education, agriculture, health etc as regards CLC programs and activities. CLCs therefore, practically do not get any direct or indirect support, except occasionally, from the district level organizations in capacity building of personnel. No district level organization provides any assistance/cooperation to CLCs in materials development or monitoring/evaluation of CLC programs.

Until now, the basic national principles on GO-NGO or public-private partnership and the partnership among the NGOs are in most part only on paper and therefore, like all other NGOs, DAM works practically alone at the center in mobilizing resources and managing the programs. DAM, however, has interaction with government agencies and many NGOs and it takes part in seminars, symposiums, workshops and conferences. This might have given some scope for CLCs to have an impact at the national level. DAM officials claim that the objectives, strategies and interventions of the newly launched donor funded post-literacy and continuing education (PLCE) project implemented by DNFE were heavily drawn upon the APPEAL supported DAM CLC model. The claim seems to be partially valid since PLCE is a result of exercise on review and evaluation of the DNFE's various ANFE projects, as well as of literacy and continuing education projects implemented by different NGOs, including the Dhaka Ahsania Mission, BRAC, UCEP, CMES and FIVDB.

The management, supervision and monitoring and evaluation practices of CLCs are hardly replicated in any form in similar programs of government agencies and NGOs. The linkage efforts at personal initiatives of CLC community workers or supervisors could penetrate to some extent to the practice of national level extension service agencies and government departments and directorates to develop a cooperation with DAM. But the cooperation could hardly contribute to capacity development of DAM staff in policy formulation, planning or implementation of literacy or training programs. Neither do the cooperating agencies have influence on policy formulation at the central/national level.

Expectations about the sustainability of CLCs in about 3 years after their formation with DAM support proved to be a failure. Some estimates suggest that raising funds from the local sources by an amount that ensures a flow of approximately Tk 1,000 a month would help CLCs to sustain without DAM grant support. But this seems to be too optimistic, largely because of lack of motivation and widespread poverty. According to some observations, CLCs are yet to reach a sustainable status. Others even found that a reduction in DAM's funding to CLCs support by 30% or more would lead to closure of CLCs. Depending on generous contributions often do not work

because members do not feel it worth paying to CLCs against the services they offer. People of the local community including the members of the CLC management committees are reluctant in contributing funds for CLC operations. CLCs are yet to be developed in a way so that they may be seen and treated by the local community as institutions the upkeep of which it feels responsible for. It is necessary to re-define the objectives of the CLC in response to the demand for the livelihood skill training and financing for starting self-employment.

The present study does not have much scope of making any comprehensive conclusion or recommendations on the future directions of CLCs because it investigated mainly the output side of the project and made only general review of the inputs side including the institutional arrangement, the management framework and tools, cost and financing of the project, and forms and methods of monitoring, evaluation and the feedback system for improving the service delivery mechanism.

Under the circumstances, one way of looking for the steps for making CLCs more effective is to take care of the project's limitations presented more or less extensively in Chapter II of the present report (section II.IV, *Limitations of CLCs*), Chapter III (section III.II, *CLC Operations and Management*) and Chapter IV (section IV.I, *The Impact and Limitations of CLCs*). Following are some suggested measures for improvement in CLC performance for a better impact:

1. Establish CLCs at locations more convenient for members of the local community to attend and equip them with necessary facilities and materials;
2. Prepare baseline data for each CLC catchment area;
3. Change CLC membership rule to include more than one member from one family;
4. Link literacy and community development activities with CLC interventions to address socio-economic needs of the target population;
5. Address the learning needs of the villagers in flexible modes to suit their own timing and arrange interventions to match their occupational needs, suitable for adoption and adaptation to changes, creating scope for switching over to new profession;
6. Arrange wider social mobilization through innovative forms and methods;
7. Integrate learning material and learning with recreational programs;
8. Monitor through a more systematic and up to date data about the field/target people/local community;
9. Link IGP activities with market;
10. Formalize linkage with government agencies and other NGOs operating in the locality;
11. Devote more time to literacy activities and accordingly, design programs as core and non-core activities;
12. Help the community in learning how to find the solutions to problems instead of giving the solutions to them;
13. Improve management skills of the community workers;
14. Incorporate community worker as secretary of CLC management committee; and
15. Create a multipurpose professional/technical backstopping/support system for CLCs at the community level.

Introduction

Background

The Community Learning Center (CLC) project undertaken by Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) with support from UNESCO PROAP for the period 1998-2001 within the framework of APPEAL with financial assistance of Japan and Norway covered 18 countries including Bangladesh. CLC is conceived primarily as a local educational institution (outside the formal education system) set up and managed by local people to provide various learning opportunities for community development and improvement of quality of life of the people in operation areas. CLC, the new type of institution for continuing education, is also supposed to create opportunities for empowerment of the poor people, especially the disadvantaged women, and promotion of their social transformation.

The UNESCO supported APPEAL CLC project in Bangladesh “Organization of Community Learning Centers for Lifelong Learning and Community Development” has been implemented by DAM, an NGO and member of the APPEAL Training and Research Consortium. The project provided support for establishment of 45 *Ganokendras* (literally, community centers, which are in fact, centers for literacy and continuing education, the field operation unit of DAM) in Narsinghdi district as post literacy centers and lifelong learning centers, focusing particularly on income generating activities and improvement of quality of life through various programs, including especially those relating to healthcare and nutrition. The UNESCO support to CLCs in funding continued for a brief period (3 years, the first year for institutional development, the second year for program activities, and the third for consolidation and expansion of program activities) with modest expectations about the outcome, which included

- a. establishing CLCs with local management committee and local fund mobilization system;
- b. delivering literacy services and learning courses;
- c. providing facilities for issue-based discussions and conducting them;
- d. training of 96 female neo-literates in livelihood skills and entrepreneurship;
- e. linking CLCs with local service organizations;
- f. creating 2 community resource centers and 12 child development centers; and
- g. organizing workshops for dissemination of lessons learnt from the CLC project.

It was the expectation by both DAM and the UNESCO PROAP that CLCs would move towards sustainability by the beginning of the year 2002. Under the project, DAM could create 45 CLCs in Narsinghdi district but later, phased out 17 of them and formed 10 new ones in Jhenidah district. The total number of APPEAL CLCs is thus considered to be 38. Sometime in April (?) 2002, UNESCO PROAP initiated an evaluation study to look into the impact of the APPEAL CLC project in Bangladesh at three levels: the community level, the district level, and the national level. The study design required that at the preparatory phase it would study documents and develop the evaluation framework and questionnaires for survey of CLCs, and at the execution phase, it would collect firsthand information from the project site and personnel, make field visits and conduct interviews with personnel of government offices and NGOs, analyze the information, and finally, prepare the report.

The study was completed sometime in November (?) 2002 and the report that followed was reviewed at different levels, after which the UNESCO PROAP decided to make further investigation into the impact of APPEAL CLCs in Bangladesh. It was proposed that the new CLC evaluation study be prepared in a restructured form implying possibly, the requirement that in structure, the new report would be clearer than the previous one for easy understanding and quick

comprehension and presented in line with the UNESCO guidelines with specific focus on the impact of the project.

Objectives and Methodology of the Study

According to the revised design, the new study is to

- a. conduct thorough review of the previous evaluation report (Impact Evaluation: Community Learning Centers, Bangladesh, Revised Report, undated), the CLC project proposal and other related documents and obtain opinions from relevant government and NGO officials;
- b. collect data through questionnaire-based survey of CLC project beneficiaries in Narsinghdi and Jhenidah, as well as through discussions with them for assessing the impact of the project; and
- c. prepare and submit a new report on the impact of APPEAL CLCs in Bangladesh.

The approach in the evaluation has been a participatory one involving DAM officials at its headquarters and the CLC personnel at the two project areas, particularly the community workers, project beneficiaries and representatives of the local community. A questionnaire-based sample survey was conducted in the field to assess the management and operations of CLCs and the impact of CLC activities on the project beneficiaries and on the community they belong to. Field visits were conducted to gather first hand information about different aspects of the evaluation and personal interviews were conducted with some members of the local public.

The questionnaires had been developed in consultation with DAM's Ganokendra (CLC) program coordinator. The sample in the field included 1 community worker and 5 CLC members from each of the randomly selected 6 (out of the total of 28) CLCs of Narsinghdi and 1 community worker and 6 CLC members from each of the randomly selected 3 (out of the total of 10) CLCs of Jhenidah. Thus the sample size was 9 (6+3) community workers and 48 (30+18) CLC members. In addition, the fieldwork included informal discussion with many of the CLC members, some community workers, and local patrons of CLCs, of which 18 cases could be presented as individual stories. These 18 cases included 14 CLC members, 3 community workers and one local patron.

Side by side with administering the questionnaires and field visits, a thorough review of reports and documents was conducted for having a comprehensive idea about the project, the course of its implementation, the performance of CLCs and the existing knowledge about the impact of the project on its beneficiaries and their communities. The most important in the list of such documents were:

- a. the CLC evaluation report (Impact Evaluation: Community Learning Centers, Bangladesh, Revised Version, author not named, undated), following which the present study was undertaken;
- b. the CLC project proposal and DAM action plans for CLCs;
- c. DAM statement on achievements of CLCs in the 3 years of UNESCO support; and
- d. CLC and Ganokendra evaluation reports prepared by consultants/research teams at different times.

One of the data collection instruments was a detailed checklist of queries to the DAM officials given to them at a very early stage of the present study. The data and information collected through literature review, interviews, case studies and discussions, and the DAM response to the

checklist were analyzed and processed by using necessary simple statistical methods and some basic computer data processing software.

Limitations of the Study

The initial study plan was to conduct a relatively small sample survey supplemented by tracer studies of CLC members and interviews of officials/representatives of various government agencies and NGOs. But the idea was later revised and instead of tracer studies, the experience of individual CLC members was presented as individual stories. Tracer studies would have little meaning because of the short history of CLCs and consequently, of the short duration of the members' association with them. Further, the review of a large mass of secondary sources and personal discussions with DAM officials revealed that involvement of government agencies and NGOs in CLC activities is marginal and relates to cooperation in conducting training and sometimes, to the use of CLCs as venue for delivery of agricultural extension or inoculation services. The linkages are informal and are established more at personal initiatives than through institutional arrangement. Taking these facts into consideration, as well as under the time constraint, formal discussions with government agencies and NGOs were not arranged, although views and comments of their representatives had been accommodated in this report since the authors of a large number of other reports reviewed for its preparation had already interviewed the concerned persons. The present study also accommodates the findings from discussions on many relevant issues with a number of persons some time in April 2003 in course of conducting a study of various government and non-government programs of non-formal education and continuing education/life skill training, including those of the Dhaka Ahsania Mission.

The Structure of the Report

The evaluation report is presented in five chapters and the content of these chapters are:

1. Review of CLC project proposal;
2. Performance of DAM Ganokendras (CLCs) as evaluated in various study reports;
3. Review of the Impact Evaluation Report, following which the present study was undertaken;
4. Evaluation of CLCs through a fresh round of study of documents, field visits, questionnaire-based sample survey, case studies, and discussions with CLC personnel and members of the local community in CLC operation areas; and
5. Conclusions.

Chapter I

From Ganokendra, the Community Centers to CLCs, the Community Learning Centers

I.I Formation of CLCs

Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM), a social welfare organization established in 1958 operates with community-based development interventions. The organization offers education services through literacy program (since 1981), adult literacy program (since 1984) and post-literacy program (since 1986). It established small village libraries, which were later (1992) converted into village learning and community action centers known as *Ganokendra* (GK) or community center with facilities for continuing education and sports, cultural and recreational activities. In a joint meeting in September 1998, UNESCO PROAP and UNESCO Dhaka decided to provide funding support to DAM in a program of converting/transforming a number of these GKs into community learning centers (CLCs) which would continue to operate as libraries, provide life skills (including skills in income generating activities) and community training (e.g., issue-based discussion, gender training), extend information and resource services (e.g., awareness development campaign on issues such as arsenic contamination, or human rights), and develop networking functions (e.g., accessing government health services). CLCs are expected to conduct their own regular programs and also serve as the focal points for delivery of services by various government (including local government) and private organizations.

At present, DAM has its programs in as many as 58 districts and 150 upazilas of Bangladesh. In 1996, it had a target of establishing 821 GKs in 16 upazilas of 5 districts and of them, 730 were functioning in 1998-99. During 1999-2001, DAM established 320 new GKs and of the total, 10 were closed down in 2001 and 20 in 2002. Nearly 64% of the GKs are implemented/operated by DAM with local support and the remaining 36% by DAM in collaboration with local NGOs.

The main objectives of GK activities are to:

- contribute to poverty alleviation through literacy, continuing education and life skill training;
- enhance income of the target population;
- empower the poor (especially, the distressed women) in terms of their social and economic position; and
- sensitize them on their entitlement.

With gradual widening of development interventions, the GKs, especially the ones that are transformed into CLCs are expected to develop networking with their respective community resource centers (CRC), lobby with the government bodies, use DAM's audio-visual units and DAM's sister institute for IT, conduct vocational training and arrange mainstreaming of GK learners, particularly through developing an equivalency framework for them with formal education system. In line with this, GKs

- provide facilities for lifelong learning and community development;
- facilitate institutional support for the people in the community towards improvement of quality of life, their social empowerment and economic self-reliance; and
- serve as both literacy and post-literacy centers.

These functions are consistent with the CLC approach, which in fact is now followed by most GKs and therefore, in the remaining part of this section of the present report, the term CLC, unless otherwise stated, will stand for both GKs and CLCs to represent field operation units of DAM.

CLCs are locally managed institutions and are designed to meet the local needs and expectations. They render services to both their members and non-members and provide basic education for the illiterates, continuing education for the neo-literates and skill training for all. They offer *ad hoc* need-based training activities, in cooperation with other government or non-government agencies. A major function of the CLCs is to bring people of a community together for enabling them as a community network with NGOs and government and organizing access to services that are available to them. CLCs also operate as information resource centers and library (stocked with easy-to-read materials, newspapers and magazines) and recreation centers for the poor segments of the local population. Theoretically, CLCs follow six basic ideas of APPEAL, the Asia Pacific Program of Education for All, which are:

- a. post literacy;
- b. balancing general and technical education;
- c. income generating activities;
- d. improvement of the standard of living;
- e. promotion of personal qualities and talents; and
- f. development of new skills and knowledge to match future requirements.

The CLC activities can be classified into five groups, such as (a) basic literacy, (b) post-literacy and continuing education, (c) skill development related to employment and IGA, (d) social mobilization, and (e) cultural development. The literacy program is exclusively for illiterates while the others are for all groups.

CLCs are usually multipurpose centers for their members, as well as for the local community as a whole. The different uses of the centers (according to some revealed priority) are: meeting place for savings and credit activities, education center/school, recreation area, library and reading place, place for socializing, venue for skill training, place for religious ceremonies, emergency shelter, venue for workshops and training, place to discuss problems and settle conflicts, occasional health center, and venue for wedding ceremony. [Rahman, JA et al, 2003]

I.II CLC: A New Type of Institution for Local Communities

Rahman, JA et al (2003) identified some salient features of CLCs and indicate that CLCs

- operate as education, information and service centers for improvement in the quality of life;
- sensitize people about their rights;
- are managed by local community;
- are subject to result-oriented monitoring; and
- use information technology on experimental basis.

According to DAM's project proposal to UNESCO PROAP on the CLC program (*Organization of Community Learning Centers for Lifelong Learning and Community Development*, prepared for UNESCO, PROAP by Dhaka Ahsania Mission, May 1999) CLCs are seen as alternative institutions in a situation when

- (a) principal learning opportunities (formal and non-formal literacy programs) available are time-bound and cannot benefit large sections of society in rural Bangladesh;

- (b) absence of reading materials in rural Bangladesh results in many literate people relapsing into illiteracy;
- (c) rural people cannot be taken out of the poverty circle because of illiteracy and lack of information;
- (d) people are not much aware of the choices that they have regarding their health, environment, social structures and economic situation;
- (e) local problems often go unresolved because the community does not know where it can turn for advice, solutions, and help; and
- (f) because of a lack of information, many communities miss out on government services to which they are entitled, or NGO services which they can avail of.

I.III The Objectives and Expected Output and Effects of CLCs

The general objectives of CLCs were (a) to operate as institutions of continuing education in line with the UNESCO framework; (b) to address the needs of lifelong learning and community development; and (c) to empower individuals and communities through education, training, and information support services towards poverty alleviation and improvement of quality of life. The specific objectives were to:

- (a) organize 45 CLCs with community initiative;
- (b) ensure operation of CLCs as community libraries and as centers of information counseling and resource services;
- (c) develop CLCs' stock of necessary reading materials to promote awareness about health, environment, social and other issues;
- (d) organize community development activities through CLCs;
- (e) provide training through CLCs according to local needs;
- (f) organize local management structures for CLCs; and
- (g) enable CLCs to networking with government agencies and NGOs.

According to the project design the target beneficiaries of the project were those who completed adult and adolescent literacy courses and the school dropouts and 70% of total beneficiaries should be female. The project document however, says that CLCs are open to all members of the community in which they are located: men, women and children are welcome in CLC activities such as reading in CLC libraries, issue-based discussions and life skill training, and social and cultural programs.

The project design identifies CLC activities as

- (a) catering for lifelong learning;
- (b) reaching out to all in the community;
- (c) serving the information need of the community;
- (d) networking among existing services;
- (e) responding to local needs and aspirations;
- (f) working as a multipurpose and multi-functional institution; conduct locally managed programs;
- (g) implementing low-cost intervention for continuing education;

- (h) increasing the stock of materials for CLC library (books, booklets, journals, newspapers, newsletters, wall magazines) and other material and equipment including those for games and sports, information dissemination, and entertainment in CLCs;
- (i) operating revolving fund (loan) for tree planting; and
- (j) organizing community action groups, training up CLC management team through organization and orientation and training the CLC facilitators (the planned training output was only marginal – one person of each CLC to attend gender training session each year; three persons of each CLC to attend leadership training session each year; and each CLC to receive training on manufacturing smokeless oven).

The project document indicated that the expected effects of CLC operations would be the following:

- (a) increase in membership;
- (b) increase in literacy;
- (c) reduction in relapsing to illiteracy;
- (d) creation of sustainable locally managed institutions;
- (e) increased awareness of the members/community about health, environment, social and economic issues; and
- (f) increased access of members/community to services through networking by CLCs.

Chapter II

Performance of CLCs: A Summary of Findings from Literature Review

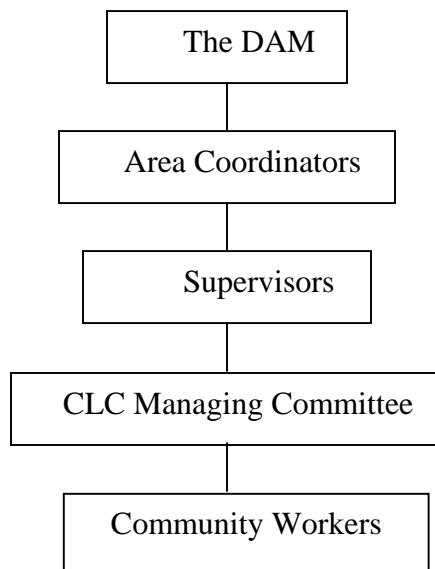
II.I General Features of CLCs

Findings of the various evaluation reports suggest that the DAM Ganokendra's including the transformed ones i.e., the CLCs may be seen as model institutions with the following features:

- a. centers involve simple physical structure, usually with one room made of locally available material;
- b. the land for the center is donated by local community members, a financial support to build the center comes from HQs and counterpart labor and materials are supplied by the local community;
- c. learning materials may have various sources, but are made available centrally by the DAM headquarters;
- d. the center is essentially a reading place or a library and it also has facilities for sports, cultural and recreational activities, as well as for a wide range of training activities, especially on life skills;
- e. key services provided by the center are basic literacy for the illiterates and continuing education for the neo-literates;
- f. the center is managed by a locally formed management committee;
- g. the center operates as a social and physical infrastructure that helps people to draw resources and services from others in and outside the community; in other words, it operates as a forum for delivery of services (especially agricultural extension and primary healthcare services) by other NGOs and government agencies.

II.I.I Management of CLCs

The responsibility of overall management of a CLC lies with a **management committee** elected for a period of two years. Members of the committee including its chairman are representatives of local community and during the period before 2000, it had 5 to 7 members. At present, the CLC management committee has 7 to 13 members. The overall structure of CLC management is as follows:



The CLC management committee is responsible for preparing plans for the activities the CLC would undertake, while the supervisor and the area coordinator of DAM extend supports to the committee and the coordinator to implement the programs. Although the management operates in a decentralized system, there is a regular communication between the community workers, the management committee, the supervisors, the area coordinators and the DAM headquarters. A CLC management committee forms a number of sub-committees to enhance initiatives and participation of more members of CLCs and of the community in CLC activities. The usual responsibilities of CLC management committee are to hold monthly meetings, supervise CLC activities, oversee the collection of funds and subscriptions, monitor maintenance and repair of CLC facilities, organize rallies and social programs, and review records and registers. Not all CLC management committees, however, are equally active. For example, on an average, management committee meetings are attended by 40 to 80% of the members and although management committee meetings are supposed to take place once a month, in many CLCs, the committees meet less frequently. In many cases, the management committees are concerned with day-to-day administration of CLCs while others deal with policy issues only. Most plans of CLC management committees however, remain as paper work and lack specific steps and the time frame for implementation.

The **area coordinator** is a permanent staff of the DAM, responsible for all the CLCs in a thana having 45 to 153 CLCs and the average number of CLCs under an area coordinator is 81. The major responsibilities of an area coordinator include supervision of CLCs, monitoring the progress, supervision of the distribution of teaching materials, keeping contact with NGOs, and planning the development programs.

The **supervisor** is responsible for a number of CLCs ranging from 12-43 (the average being about 25) and is accountable to area coordinator. The responsibilities of a supervisor are supervision, communication with local people and NGOs, providing assistance to the community workers, and arranging monthly meetings, training and other programs. A supervisor visits CLCs 2 or 3 times a month and during these visits, a supervisor usually checks registers and discusses problems with community workers and the CLC members and the performance of CLCs and the ways to improve it with local community members. According to findings of an opinion survey of the supervisors

- a. the daily attendance of the women PTG members is poor, largely because, of the heavy household workload;
- b. the membership fee payment is low;
- c. CLCs have a limited number of books in their stock;
- d. members of the CLC management committee are reluctant in giving time for meeting and in investing in maintenance and repair of the centers;
- e. a large number of community workers are irregular in attending their work places and many lack commitment, largely because they are paid low but are to work prolonged hours;
- f. it is difficult to mobilize members, and even the local community in tasks such as repair and maintenance of centers;
- g. because of the large number of CLCs under supervision and the extensiveness of the reporting requirements, it is difficult for supervisors to prepare all monitoring reports in time;
- h. higher authorities in DAM do not always properly respond to CLC needs, especially the financial problems in running the CLCs and carrying out their programs.

The **community worker**, almost invariably a locally recruited woman, has the responsibility of registering members, keeping the CLCs open for the use of members, imparting lessons to literates and neo-literates, collecting fees and donations, and carrying out training and other programs of CLCs. Community workers are often overloaded with the tasks of keeping records (minutes of meetings, daily attendance, membership fees, training registers, financial records, other registers), imparting literacy, keeping the CLCs and their surroundings clean, reading out and explaining stories from books and newspaper items, and making home visits to ensure attendance of members in CLCs. They do not have much time and energy for providing continuing education services (which they sometimes treat as a secondary function), organizing vocational training, conducting issue-based discussions, carrying out social development and awareness campaign, and developing linkages with government agencies and NGOs. Some of the major problems according to community workers are:

- a. the absence and irregular attendance of CLC members and the lack of their interest in CLC activities;
- b. difficulties in collecting monthly contributions and the financial problems in implementing CLC activities;
- c. difficulties in mobilizing members for maintenance and repairing of centers;
- d. poor functioning of some CLCs and difficulties in reporting about their performance.

It may be noted that CLCs operate with a somewhat open-ended agenda for organizing literacy and other activities based on expressed needs and opportunities available through cooperation with other government and non-government agencies. Greater responsibilities and decision-making in CLCs devolve on the CLC management committee and the DAM personnel such as area coordinators and supervisors function more as facilitators, helpers in networking and resource persons, rather than as organizers of the activities.

II.I.II Costs, Financing and Sustainability of CLCs

The financing of CLCs comes from three sources – contribution from the DAM headquarters, monthly fee from the CLC members, and donation by local people, organizations and institutions including local government bodies. CLCs are unique in the sense that DAM provides technical, material and financial support services during the initial years of its operation only and the support is supposed to be gradually phased out to transfer the responsibility of running the centers by local management committees.

A significant number of CLCs are supervised and monitored by DAM but in fact have been established and are run by other NGOs. These CLCs receive teaching materials and other logistic support but not the financial support from DAM, while the DAM run CLCs receive a monthly grant from DAM, although not enough to meet the costs. The deficit is met from the members' subscription and local community donations, which, according to a survey, amount to less than one third (32%) of the total costs a CLC.

Records relating to costs and financing of the CLC program are not readily available in the DAM's office. What could have been collected from personal interviews suggest that DAM provides Tk 2,500 for construction of a CLC house (this is approximately one-fourth of the total cost of construction, the remaining is funded from contributions by local community people). DAM's contribution in total cost of operation of a CLC may be presented as under:

1. Honorarium of community worker (facilitator):	1 no × 12 months × Tk 800	= Tk 9,600
2. Training		= Tk 55,200
a. Community worker:	1 no × 10 days × Tk 250	
b. Chairman, CLC:	1 no × 3 days × Tk 250	
c. Cashier, CLC:	1 no × 3 days × Tk 250	
d. Member, CLC:		
Gender Development:	5 no × 6 days × Tk 200	
Environmental preservation:	5 no × 5 days × Tk 200	
Improved oven:	10 no × 3 days × Tk 250	
Primary healthcare:	1 no × 6 days × Tk 200	
Skill development:	5 no × 14 days × Tk 250	
General development (community leader):	2 no × 4 days × Tk 300	
Leadership development:	2 no × 4 days × Tk 200	
TBA training:	1 no × 10 days × Tk 1000	
3. House construction		= Tk 2,500
4. Furniture		= Tk 8,000
5. Reading material		= Tk 9,360
a. Books, basic & follow-up:	Tk 4000	
b. Exercise books, pencils:	Tk 2000	
c. Daily newspaper:	Tk 3000	
d. Monthly journals/quarterlies:	Tk 360	
6. Refreshes training allowance	1 no × Tk 600	= Tk 600
7. Supply of plants/saplings		= Tk 100
	Total	= Tk. 85,360

Source: Compiled from field data

In addition to the above, DAM bears the expenses of providing the training (the trainers' fees and venue charges) and also the cost of overall supervision and monitoring CLC program, which according to the best guess, accounts for about 10% of the total born by DAM for a CLC i.e., Tk 8,536. This makes DAM's total contribution to the cost of a CLC equal to Tk 93,896. DAM's contribution to house construction, furniture or reading materials, however, is only lump sum and partial. A CLC needs to spend more on these heads and the additional financing is generated from contributions by local community members. If training cost is considered to be part of the fixed cost for a CLC, the total fixed cost of a center (which has a fairly long life, requiring renewal say, after 10 years) including training (15,000), house construction (10,000), furniture (15,000) & others (5,000) totaling to approximately Tk 100,000.00, the annual average of which is Tk 10,000.00. Added to this, is the operational cost which include community workers salary/honorarium, utility bills (mainly, electricity), or kerosine (as fuel for lanterns), newspapers and periodicals, expenses in observing national days or organizing cultural functions, chalks, pencils etc. which in total account for about Tk 20,000 per year.

The total annual cost of operation of a CLC thus becomes Tk 30,000 (making the average per month at Tk 2500) and if a CLC has about 100 members on average, the cost per member (per year) stands at Tk 300.00.

The average monthly operation cost of a CLC, according to another estimate based on estimates for major heads of expenses such as honorarium to the community worker, the newspaper bills and electricity bills (in some centers) is about Tk 635. By and large it may be assumed that raising of approximately Tk 1,000 a month from local sources would help CLCs to sustain without DAM grant support. But this seems to be too optimistic, largely because of lack of motivation and widespread poverty. One of the many useful suggestions is to link the issue of

CLC sustainability with improved income generation activities for households. Better livelihood training for the members and increased access of them to credit create opportunities for additional income of the members and this can motivate them to contribute more to financing CLCs. Some individuals may be motivated to make donations if they are made the chairmen of CLCs or the latter are named after such persons contributing land or bearing the cost of construction. But depending on generous contributions often do not work and CLCs are to be really developed in way so that they may be seen and treated by the local community as institutions the upkeep of which it feels responsible for.

According to a recent report (Ahmed, M, 2003), the average amount of members' contribution per CLC is Tk 206 per year and the amount could not be raised beyond Taka 300. A survey-based evaluation report (FREPD, 2001) concluded that CLCs would take some more years to reach a sustainable status and a 30% reduction in DAM's current level of financial support (grant) to CLCs would lead to their closure. This seems to reflect the reality as according to a study, nearly 80% of the total income of CLCs are grants from DAM, about 12% come from membership fees and the remaining are income from other sources (Rahman, JA et al 2003). Contrary to such observations on the nature of funding, the report also presented results of analyzing data on 22 matured CLCs, which suggested that the share of different sources in the financing a CLC was: DAM 13.25%, local people 22.69%, chairman of CLC management committee 48.47%, and local Member of Parliament 15.58%. Also, not all CLCs die after the withdrawal of funding support. There are, however, evidences of some centers being closed down, but finance was not the only reason for discontinuity of such 'closed centers'. Lack of interest and commitment from local community were other major reasons.

III.I.III CLC Activities and the Participation of Members/Community

DAM has identified a number of programs that need to be performed in all CLCs. These include gender, sanitation, environmental conservation, IGA, health awareness, water and sanitation and other socio-cultural development. DAM provides both material and financial support to implement the programs.

The most important activities of the CLCs are: Library, literacy programs, games and sports, continuing education for neo-literates, cultural and social programs, and health information. Newspaper reading, livelihood training and debating are also important activities. However, only 25% CLCs provide these services. Also, it is worth mentioning that not all services are provided by all CLCs (Ahmed, M, 2003). Vocational training was not in the priority list of activities of the CLCs and only recently, it was taken as an agenda for them.

The average number of participants in a year in a DAM-run CLC was estimated at 179. Among the participants, females constituted 82%. The average number of participants was 97 persons (72 females) a year for CLCs run by other NGOs. In addition to the training programs, the DAM CLCs also organize programs for social awareness, IGA, water management, sanitation and health in collaboration with government agencies or other organizations.

CLCs are open to all people in the operation areas. The target population comprises children, adolescents and adults, male and female, residing in the surrounding areas. Participants in CLCs are of two kinds: the primary target group members (PTGs), which are from poorer families and the secondary target group members (STGs), which are all others interested in CLC programs and attending its training sessions or taking part in its social and cultural activities. A recent survey (FREPD 2001) found that only 41% of the adults in the community became members of CLCs -

28% of the males and 55% the females. Poverty and poverty related factors serve as deterrents to enrolment in CLCs.

On an average, CLCs remain open 4–5 days a week. For continuing education, they are open two hours a day (28% of CLCs) or 3 hours a day (72%) and for other activities, 25% of them are open 2-3 hours a day, 50% are open 4–5 hours a day and 25% more than 5 hours a day. The number of different people served by a CLC over the period between 1999 and 2002 ranged between 28 and 122 persons in a working day, for an average around 70, a figure which had declined over years and at present, the attendance in CLCs is poor. This may be attributed to the fact that CLCs do not have new reading materials and according to many, CLC activities have ‘outlived’ their usefulness. Further, it appears quite logical that CLCs cannot conduct issue-based discussions, or life-skill training on each and every day and not all members have interest in all types of training or issue-based discussions.

Participation in activities of the CLCs has a correlation with stock of reading materials in them, the games and sports facilities they have and the nature and extent of their activities in training and social awareness campaign. Not all CLCs are equally equipped and managed. On average, a CLC in 2001 had 84 books and only 20% of the CLC had journals (not exceeding three). One CLC on average conducted a training program in 3.5 months (duration of one training program 8-10 days, number of trainees in a training program 15). The training was mainly on social awareness with some on income generation activities.

Members of both PTG and STG are expected to regularly visit CLCs for reading (newspapers, periodicals or magazines and books of different types) or participating in other activities such as discussions, cultural programs and sports, but the available evidence suggests that CLCs do not maintain reading materials in adequate quantities or update/increase their stock and they also have a very limited facilities for games and sports. Reasons of community members for not being active in CLCs also include, in order of importance: (1) work pressure – 73% male and 65% female members, (2) opposition by husbands/mother-in-laws, (3) absence of someone to look after children, and (inconvenient location of the center, mainly its distance from the members’ residence). Also, there are arrears where a significant portion of the local population (up to 50%) is apparently not aware of the CLCs in their community and what they have to offer.

Table 2.1 important and regular activities of CLCs and reported participation in them:

Activities	Average participation (persons/month)		
	Male	Female	Both
Wall magazine	2.1	8.1	10.2
Rallies on National Days	7.0	13.4	20.4
Games and sports	15.8	37.4	53.4
Cultural program	12.0	29.0	41.0
Plantation	5.0	6.0	11.0
Rally	2.0	6.0	9.0
Literacy program (reading)	17.0	31.0	48.0
Discussion on social issues	6.0	19.0	25.0
Continuing education	22.0	50.0	72.0
Primary healthcare	8.8	37.4	46.2
Library	44.8	109.0	154.4
Modern burner	0.4	5.0	5.4
IGA	0.4	4.4	4.8

The neo-literates were found active and regular in attending the CLCs. On an average, one neo-literate visited CLC 4.98 days per week. The participation of neo-literates in the following programs are worth mentioning: 37% in education program; 22% in games and cultural programs, 11% in energy-saving and clean stove, 10% in health related programs, 7% in environment program and 5% in micro-credit programs.

II.II Achievements and Effects of CLCs

In a country like Bangladesh with low literacy and high incidence of poverty, it is essential to make them literate and then give them skills training so as to help them to be involved in IGA. The NFE programs that have been implemented over years have produced a significant number of neo-literates and it is necessary to make provision for their continuous learning. The continuous education program is required for retention of the skills they acquired and for improving their basic literacy. CLCs operate as a special type of institutions that have these objectives and offer facilities for the neo-literates and literates to improve their level of literacy, as well as for increasing their social awareness, especially about their role in community development and their rights and responsibilities.

CLC program is unique in the sense that it raises much of its resources from voluntary community contribution and although at present, the centers receive subsidies from the central organization, they are supposed to become self-supporting after a period. CLCs promote and maintain literacy and other skills of the participants at relatively low cost, but a number of studies raise questions about their replicability and long-term sustainability. The achievements and effects of CLCs, as depicted in various studies are summarized in the following few paragraphs.

II.III.I Literacy

The target group population for CLCs literacy program includes mainly the dropouts from the regular school system and the adults who have poor or limited literacy skills. CLCs, however, are accessible to all people in the area, not limited to the neo-literates from literacy centers only. The illiterates, out of school children, people with limited reading skills, local school students and youths are allowed to participate in CLC activities. Membership in a CLC is thus open to all who are interested in continuing education using the library and taking part in educative cultural activities. An average CLC has 75-100 members, 70% of whom are women.

One of the major objectives of the CLC is to prevent neo-literates from relapsing into illiteracy. In the literacy program, CLCs aim at enabling its members to

- a. independently read story books, monthly magazines or daily newspapers and explain their contents to others;
- b. write at least ten systematically organized sentences on any familiar topic, complete all common forms and receipts, reply to questions in writing and write independently to the letters' column of a newspaper; and
- c. determine sum of at least four 5-digit numbers, the subtraction involving 5-digit numbers, multiply 3-digit numbers, divide up to 5-digit number by any number up to 15, add or subtract elementary fractional numbers, and have basic idea about units of measurement such as kg, meter and liter.

CLC programs other than that on literacy has no specific duration and are planned and implemented by the local CLC management committees in consultation with the community

people and with or without support from DAM. But the literacy program has a duration of 9 months – 6 months for basic and 3 months for post literacy, which is similar to the course duration of Total Literacy Movement (TLM) program conducted by the Department of Non-formal Education, Government of Bangladesh.

According to the findings of some evaluation reports, the literacy and social awareness campaign of CLCs has been successful. The survey based FREPD evaluation report (2001) recorded that the literacy program helped in retaining and up-grading the literacy skills and improving the life style of neo-literates. But the same survey found that although the average number of members of a CLC was 100 (the number was about 80 according to other studies), the average attendance was only 16 persons per working day (4 males, 12 females). This had significantly scaled down the effect and impact of the program. Although the achievements in reading, writing, and accounting skills remain far from what an ideal CLC aims at, the CLC achievements on these counts are better than those attained by learners under the government run Non-formal Education Program-2 (CBA). Results of a formal test among selected CLC members on their literacy and life skills are presented in table 2.2.

Table 2.2 Mean performance score in different skills

Program	Reading (25)	Writing (25)	Numeracy (25)	Life skill (25)	All (100)
NFEP-2	13.2	13.4	12.5	17.5	56.6
Ganokendra (CLC)	19.2	16.5	16.0	19.3	71.0

Source: FREPD, Final Report on Evaluation of Ganokendra, 2001

These figures, however, need to be looked at as very general and cannot be accepted as authentic, at least for comparison. The CLC members put under evaluation for this purpose had different background, as they were general CLC members and included both literates (now nearly relapsing to illiteracy) and neo-literates, while the NFEP-2 learners underwent a only a six-month long literacy course.

In December 2002, DAM CLCs had 58,594 members and of them, 13,277 were illiterate when they joined CLCs. But at the reference period (December 2002) 4,137 reported to have achieved basic literacy equivalent to grade 1-2 (level A) and the DAM projected that all 13,277 would be literate by June 2003. Literacy skill tests of neo-literate CLC members who had completed a literacy curriculum of approximately 6-9 months show that

- 75% of neo-literate had secured the minimum standard in these tests;
- reading and life skill were substantially better than writing and numeracy skills; and
- males scored better than females, especially in writing skills.

A significant proportion of women members in CLC (43 to 70%) could perform simple tasks like reading big font letters and children’s books. The percentage of members who could do simple arithmetic ranged from 8 to 59% in a CLC. The experience suggests that it takes time and additional sustained effort for people to move from a basic level of literacy to developing a reading behaviour. A major effort of the CLCs however, is maintaining the basic literacy without relapsing to illiteracy, which is indeed a difficult task.

Findings of the surveys conducted in 2000 suggests that until the year, most CLCs did not provide library and literacy services, the newspaper service was very limited, the number of books per CLC was 84, and only a few CLCs had journals. In 2002, the number of books in a CLC ranged between 100 and 176 (although the number of books for different groups of readers – children, adolescents and adults – was insufficient), and 72% of CLCs had newspaper service.

Further, the materials (especially, books) available in the CLCs were insufficient for those who have progressed beyond the basic level of literacy, the literacy materials which the CLCs offered were good for new learners but remained too simple to sustain and enhance the interest of neo-literates in reading and learning.

II.II.II The Gender Focus

DAM undertook some special initiatives to attract women in the field level operations. For example, it has provisions for motorbike and a special house allowance of Tk 300.00 for women staff members. But though at least 75% of the CLC members and almost all the community workers (97%) and social teachers are women, the presence of women at the decision making level of DAM's field structure is insignificant. DAM has 5 Area Coordinators and all of them are male. Only one out of 21 Assistant Area Coordinators, and 6 out of the 65 Supervisors are women. About 10% of the Chairpersons of the CLC management committees are women.

According to available evidence, the CLC community workers devote much attention to gender and development (GAD) issues. Primers and follow-up grade books developed by DAM also contain issues such as gender division of labour, women's right to vote, equal rights of boy and girl children, and prevention of divorce and polygamy. CLCs made the women members aware about the consequences of early marriage and dowry. In many CLC areas, women had been found assertive in speaking out their problems and many women felt proud to be CLC members, particularly because, the CLCs empowered them with increased awareness about their rights, the life skills training and access to credit and enabled them to read and write, keep simple accounts, talk freely, and exchange their views with male members. Some evaluation reports suggest that there are substantial gender differences in favour of females in the skills developed and retained through CLCs. There is however, the observation that GAD is to be looked at as a cross-cutting issue calling for sensitising men about the rights of women to avoid development of men's hostile attitude towards women as a consequence of imbalance between the empowered women and the un-empowered men.

II.II.III Life Skills Training and Survival Skills

Side by side with literacy programs, CLCs give the neo-literates the scope of expanding their education and provide them training in life skills and income generating activities. The service delivery mode is highly informal and participatory. For example, the literacy and life skill training process in a CLC is conducted by community volunteers. The CLC members form special committees of representative local volunteers who provide information, counseling and community services such as repair of residential houses, repair and maintenance of roads, social afforestation, utilization of local resources etc. The CLC itself takes initiatives in networking and linkage with local government agencies for basic services and local development activities.

Various programs of CLCs such as training, issue based discussions, and cultural activities contribute to attaining survival skills by the participants and development of their social awareness. Training on health and sanitation involves concerns such as safe drinking water, arsenic contamination, sanitary latrines, primary healthcare, mother and child healthcare, nutrition and healthy conditions for food preparation. The issue in social awareness campaign include gender, violence against women and children, environmental conservation, dowry system, early marriage, rights of women and children, primary school enrolment, plantation and social peace.

According to FREPD Report (2001), social awareness and survival skills of neo-literate CLC members were higher compared to those of non-members. Differences showed particularly in

capability to write (simple) letters, contraceptive prevalence rates and adoption of family planning, attitude towards/rejection of dowry system, use of sanitary latrine, and women keeping control over their earnings, participating in family decision making, and attending public meetings. According to the same report, there were also significant differences in status of family members of CLC as compared to non-members in terms of percentage of school-aged children enrolled in primary schools, percentage of children below six years old getting all necessary inoculations, and frequency of medical check-up during pregnancy (see tables 2.3 and 2.4 below).

Table 2.3 Performance of CLC members as compared to that of others

Application of Skills				Average monthly income of respondents in Tk					
% neo-literates in CLC member households			% non-CLC members households		Neo-literates		Non-CLC Members		
					Current	Previous	Current	Previous	
Capability to write Letters	Male	Female	Male	Female	Personal level	728	319	1066	821
	61	43	51	35	Family level	3634	2970	3690	2816
Married couples Adopting Family planning	73		58		Note: income of neo-literates at personal level has increased by more than two times -from Tk 319 to Tk 728, but at family level, the change is insignificant				
Households having Access to sanitary latrine	85		69						
Households using soap after defecation and before meals	65		51						
Membership of any organization	35		15						
Female respondents to which People come to seek advice	61		43						

Source: FREPD, Final Report on Evaluation of Ganokendra, 2001

Table 2.4 Performance of CLC members as compared to that of others

Indicator	In respect of families with member of a CLC	In respect of families who do not have a CLC member
% of school age children enrolled in primary schools	76	46
% of children aged <6 taking all vaccines	85	50
Contraceptive prevalence rate	78	43
% of households which consult qualified doctors	100	39
% of women participating in household decision process	63	39
% of women who attend public meetings	63	35

Source: FREPD, Final Report on Evaluation of Ganokendra, 2001

The FREPD Report (2001) however, categorically says that there had been no notable impact on occupation and income although centers contributed to increase in awareness about women's and children's right, family planning, health and sanitation, consequence of early marriage and dowry, and the like. This finding was reflected in another evaluation report (Ahmed, M, 2003), which said that "CLCs had little impact on occupation, employment and income" since the CLC program "could not link literacy programs with skill development and credit facility for self-employment." The report however, recorded that "other benefits such as increased social awareness and consciousness are evident" and CLCs "had contributed in an important way to enable participants change their attitudes and they aspire to live a life with human dignity".

II.II.IV Credit, Employment and Income Generation

A major, if not the most important concern of the CLC members is employment and income generation and they expect that CLCs would provide services in a combination of training for income generation and access to loans with proper disbursement and repayment schedules. CLCs provide training in income generating activities and some CLCs provide savings and credit services, thanks to which the CLC members, especially the women members have improved their livelihood. The training initiatives of CLCs have helped people acquire some traditional skills

(poultry, livestock rearing, fish culture, vegetable cultivation, sewing, tailoring, embroidery etc.), as well as some new ones (such as making paper bags, batik or commercial handicrafts) but these could contribute little to their income generation because of the absence of market links. The credit support is highly inadequate, although CLC members are not restricted from accepting credit from other NGOs (such as ASA or BRAC) that operate in the area or in the surroundings. But to partner up with a separate micro-credit provider is always a difficult task, particularly, in terms of monitoring, follow-up and co-ordination.

II.II.V Social Awareness and Empowerment

The information, counseling and resource services offered by a CLC include dissemination of information on arsenic, observation of nationally important days and discussion on important news of a day or a week, about market prices or the environment etc. CLCs also conduct issue-based discussions and act as forums of socialization and development of social awareness. According to the findings of a number of evaluation reports, CLC activities have had some impact in terms of empowerment of the poor in general, and of the women, in particular. The reports inform that women/girls are now aware that they cannot be unfairly treated or discriminated against in comparison with men/boys in the households and community, they can enumerate legal provisions and requirements in relation to marriage and divorce. People now have increased knowledge about human rights, demonstrate increased ability to assert their rights and opinions without feeling threatened by the ideas of others, to claim their share and to assert their personal and community needs. People also demonstrate their willingness to struggle and apply in day-to-day living the acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Evidences also suggest that CLCs have some contribution in increasing people's awareness about the need for conserving environment and developing mutual understanding in the community. These changes, however, cannot be attributed exclusively to interventions by CLCs. CLC interventions only reinforce this empowerment process, in which government and mass media campaign, as well as other NGOs have a substantial contribution.

II.III Operational Linkages of CLCs with other Organizations

CLCs conduct health awareness campaign among its members and promote preventive healthcare, family planning and sanitary toilet practices which contribute to achievements of general objectives of the government in health and sanitation sectors. CLCs also operate as venue for inoculations and primary healthcare. Local government officials of the education directorates, department of youth development, department of social services, department of agricultural extension, directorates of health and family planning, department of women and children affairs etc often use CLCs as venue for training, issue-based discussion and delivery/distribution of inputs or service materials. Local government officials, especially, members of the union parishads are aware of the CLCs and they participate in their management and programs. The CLCs also bring local problems to the notice of the local government at the union, upazila or district level and influence them to initiate activities to solve them. In cooperation with them as well as with other NGOs, CLCs contribute to promotion of activities such as registration of births, deaths, and marriages, increase in enrolment of children in primary schools or to development activities such as improving local infrastructure.

CLC members are associated with or are members of other local organizations. According to some estimates, more than a half of the CLCs had links with micro-credit agencies such as ASA, BRAC, Grameen Bank and the local NGOs and about 80% of CLCs receive support from other organizations. The support comes in the form of training, financial help, labour, construction

materials, fixtures and books. Evaluation reports however, say that the scale/magnitude of support from other organizations, especially from government organizations is still very low and there is scope for expanding the network functions with NGOs and government offices that can help respond to the needs of CLCs.

II.IV Community Commitment, Management and Participation

CLC program attaches top priority in participatory management and field level activities and recognizes that effective and meaningful participation is required to achieve success in literacy, post-literacy and continuing education programs. The CLC management committee is to play the pivotal role in all activities of CLCs. The studies reviewed however, identify that there is a lack of commitment on the part of the learners, community people and members of CLC management committee in CLC activities.

CLC management committee members are not regular in attending monthly meetings. Their attendance ranges between 40% and 80%. Also the meetings of the management committees do not take place at regular intervals, In many CLCs, such meetings take place less frequently than once a month. The management committee often loses in efficiency because of the fact that they only formulate plans but do not specify the necessary steps and the timeframe for their implementation.

The DAM strives for the development of partnership with NGOs in developing and implementing development activities and HRD programs. CLCs have been successful, on a limited scale in developing collaboration with some NGOs, the government offices, and community leaders, especially in conducting health awareness campaign among its members, promoting preventive healthcare, family planning and sanitary toilet practices and participating in efforts of the government in achieving its development objectives in various areas such as agriculture extension, basic literacy and education, health and sanitation, social welfare, community development, and conservation of environment.

According to survey findings (e.g., FREPD, 2001), most CLCs were successful in receiving cooperation from NGOs and local communities. About 81% CLCs were able to establish networking functions with NGOs, government offices, union councils and the local communities.

II.V Sustainability

According to some observations, CLCs are yet to reach a sustainable status. Others even found that a reduction in DAM's funding to CLCs support by 30% or more would lead to closure of CLCs. But funding may not be the only reason for CLC failures. There have been evidences that some CLCs have been closed because of lack of commitment and interest from local community. Estimates suggest that raising approximately Tk 1000 a month from local sources would help CLCs to sustain without DAM grant support. But this seems to be too optimistic, largely because of lack of motivation and widespread poverty. Depending on generous contributions often does not work. CLCs are to be really developed in way so that they may be seen and treated by the local community as institutions the upkeep of which it feels responsible for.

CLCs in their present form are not sustainable. It is necessary to re-define the objectives of the GK in response to the demand for the livelihood skill training and financing for starting self-employment - in other words, turning CLCs into multipurpose learning centers for the community offering a need-based menu of learning and training opportunities.

II.VI Limitations of CLCs

CLCs, as the survey reports indicate, have a number of limitations, which include the following:

- a. CLCs are not adequately developed in terms of physical facilities, especially, the library and training infrastructure; the stock of reading materials and materials for games and sports are limited in CLCs;
- b. the supervision, follow-up and feedback systems in CLCs are weak; members of the CLC management committee are reluctant in giving time for meeting; a large number of community workers are irregular in attending their work places and many lack commitment, largely because they are paid low but are to work prolonged hours; because of the large number of CLCs under supervision and the extensiveness of the reporting requirements, it is difficult for supervisors to prepare all monitoring reports in time;
- c. community participation in financing CLC activities is inadequate; the monthly membership fee is nominal but collection of fees from the members, as well as mobilising them in maintenance and repair of centers are difficult tasks; it is not easy to mobilize members of the CLC management committee and the local communities in all places in providing the finance for establishment and maintenance/repair of CLCs and conducting CLC activities;
- d. training programs for marketable skills in CLCs are small and limited;
- e. CLC members are not regular in attending CLC meetings and lack interest in CLC activities; the daily attendance of PTG members is poor, largely because, of the heavy household workload of the women;
- f. higher authorities in DAM do not always properly respond to CLC needs, especially the financial problems in running the CLCs and carrying out their programs.

CLC supervisors and community workers share these observations on limitations of CLCs. The community workers are often overloaded with the tasks of keeping records (minutes of meetings, daily attendance, membership fees, training registers, financial records, other registers), imparting literacy, keeping the CLCs and their surroundings clean, reading out and explaining stories from books and newspaper items, and making home visits to ensure attendance of members in CLCs. They do not have much time and energy for providing continuing education services (which they sometimes treat as a secondary function), organizing vocational training, conducting issue-based discussions, carrying out social development and awareness campaign, and developing linkages with government agencies and NGOs.

Notwithstanding these limitations, CLCs developed as an NGO-sponsored model of continuing non-formal education program, which does not appear to be too costly and the costs incurred are shared by the sponsor NGO, by participants/members/learners and by community people. The benefits, though not as promising as were theoretically set, are not too insignificant. The most significant contribution of the project seems to be its operation as an exposure of the poor and disadvantaged men and women to basic literacy, post-literacy and continuing education for improvement of life-style (i.e., functional literacy for the world of work).

As of today, the CLC program needs much more improvement in operations to create substantial impact in terms of spreading literacy, widening then scope of self-employment and income generating opportunities and reduction in poverty. The full-scale implementation of the program would require new inputs in the form of reading materials, wider training facilities, and demonstration-based orientation of the CLC members in life-skill training. Strengthening of libraries would also require additional resources. The limited scale support the program receives from the local community kept it working at the present level, but according to some estimates, a 30% reduction in DAM's current funding support may lead to closure of many CLCs. This aspect

needs to be carefully studied. Also the most fundamental thing to be studied about the organization in some more details is the mode of delivery of the literacy and post-literacy services and the way local initiative and resources are engaged in these services.

In conclusion, it can be said that CLC program is unique in the sense that it raises much of its resources from voluntary community contribution and CLCs operate as centers of continuing education with some limited success, promote and maintain literacy and other skills of the participants at relatively low cost, albeit with the reservations that in their present form they are possibly they are not replicable it is not very unjustified to question their long-term sustainability.

Chapter III **Evaluation of APPEAL Supported CLCs**

[A review of the preliminary report on APPEAL supported CLCs – *Impact Evaluation: Community Learning Centres, Bangladesh, UNESCO Asia and Pacific Region Bureau for Education, Bangkok, July?, 2003*]

The impact study part of the report was based largely on secondary sources and a few case studies. The field survey for the study covered mainly management aspects. The evaluation team visited 4 APPEAL supported CLCs (out of 10) in Jhenidah and 6 (out of 24) in Narsinghdi.

The report provided many suggestions, especially on future directions of the CLCs for making them effective and sustainable saying implicitly, that the operation of CLCs could be improved a lot. In fact, the report indicated many deficiencies in the operation and management of CLCs. But in an effort to do so, the focus was shifted from the impact agenda to the management issue, although that perspective was also not treated in an organized framework.

The report addressed a number of aspects of the impact of CLCs on their members at individual and community level. But discussion on the same issues appeared in too many different places of the report, which made it difficult to draw precise conclusions. Also, the conclusions drawn in the report were not based on adequate empirical evidence. Many findings came from opinions expressed by CLC facilitators and the chairmen of CLC managing committees, which were ‘desired outcomes’ and might not necessarily be the field realities.

III.I CLC Objectives

The report indicates that the activities of the APPEAL supported CLCs are conducted with a number of objectives for the benefit of the members and these objectives are:

- (a) organization of library where members read books and newspapers;
- (b) training in literacy, continuing education, vocational and income-generating activities (vegetable cultivation, nursery, poultry, fishery, dairy, sewing, weaving, candle making, batik painting, handicrafts, running grocery shops etc), and entrepreneurship;
- (c) provision of micro-credit;
- (d) organization of issue-based discussion, cultural programs and observance of special days;
- (e) promotion of gender equity;
- (f) training on various issues such as health and hygiene, (childcare, prevention of diseases, care in case of pregnancy, HIV/AIDS awareness, sanitation and safe drinking water), as well as assistance in taking patients to hospitals/clinics which are located at places far from their villages;
- (g) building awareness about how to tackle family problems, or women trafficking;
- (h) training and support in plantation;
- (i) training on environment conservation; and
- (j) advocacy.

According to the report, a major objective of the APPEAL supported CLCs is the gender development, which they can attain through

- a. functional literacy of the women;
- b. their economic freedom;
- c. increasing their self confidence and capacity to identify problems and to solve them;

- d. creation of potential self-employment opportunities for them;
- e. development of their awareness and making them conscious about their needs; and
- f. improvement of their status in the family.

The report says that elements of all these have been amply demonstrated by a number of women attending CLC training.

The report records that CLCs provide primary education in a situation when 40% of the rural children are deprived of formal primary education. The report does not indicate how many members attended the literacy training over time, or what the learners had actually attained in terms of their skill in literacy, numeracy or life skills.

According to the report, resource persons have been available for training in all the said areas but it does not give any account of implementation of the training programs. The study could collect some elaborate data on the types and number of participants in training on different areas, the quality of the training, the application of skills acquired by the trainees, and the extent to which they were benefited in terms of employment, income generation and standard of living. The report claims that all CLCs have 'successfully implemented training programs' but it also says that training programs could be effectively organized on 'continuing education' and 'male-female relationship' and training in other areas have been executed in a limited scale and were poorly attended.

The report presents the account of benefits reached to members in a very sketchy way. From the responses of the limited number of CLC members interviewed, it is evident that some could learn to read short and simple sentences, some could recognize a few letters but could not decipher simple sentences, some could read and write simple sentences, while some members found that CLCs had not been useful at all. The CLC facilitators and the chairmen of the CLC managing committees interviewed during the field work however, claimed that CLCs had contributed to increase in literacy through continuing education, increase in enrolment in primary education, improvement in sanitation and environment, improvement in gender equity, and reduction in dowry and domestic violence. But all these seem to reflect 'wishful thinking'.

III.II CLC Operations and Management

Following are the findings of the report relating to operations and management of APPEAL supported CLCs and their linkage with other agencies:

- a. CLCs are housed on more or less adequate amount of land, most part of which are donated by local people; 75% of CLCs are owned by the local community;
- b. CLC membership is largely dominated by women; they account for 75% of the membership roll;
- c. CLCs have center management committees (CMC) in place, but not all members of the CMC are regular in attending monthly meetings;
- d. CLC members pay monthly fees and other members of the local communities contribute to funding of CLCs and/or donate articles (such as TV, sewing machine), but these contributions are much less than what is required as supplements to DAM support in proper functioning of CLCs;
- e. Area coordinators conduct routine visits to monitor and oversee CLC activities; in monitoring the CLC activities, they use some key indicators (such as, use of DAM developed materials, members' participation in preparation of wall-magazines, operation of a CLC as community library, CLCs' undertaking of information counseling and

- resource services activities, participation rate of children, progress in terms of learning achievements, application of skills in practical life, community participation, mobilization of resources by a CLC from local community);
- f. CLCs could establish linkages with providers of government extension services (e.g., in agriculture including fisheries, poultry and livestock, health, education, and environment sectors) and with large NGOs, although the extension of cooperation received from them were not uniform and adequate in case of all CLCs; some networking have been developed with initiative by the central DAM management;
 - g. some CLCs operate as community resource centers (CRC) that provide professional, technical and logistic support services (advice, training, promotion of local peoples' participation, supervision, information sharing) to other CLCs;

According to the report, CLCs suffers from a number of weaknesses. The continuing education, as said in the report, had failed totally in one area (Jhenidah) and by 50% at the other (Raipura/Narsinghdi), adult education failed by 50% in Jhenidah and cultural and income generating programs failed by about 17% in Raipura; the reasons for failure include withdrawal/leaving of members from CLCs and reported misuse of funds; many members left the center because (i) regular attendance in CLC meetings had not been a binding (once some members become irregular, their habit of not attending ultimately led them to permanently desert the CLCs); (ii) a feeling (of many members) that paying fees was not worth the services offered by the CLCs; (iii) religious superstitions (for example, *purda* restricted many women from continuing membership in CLCs); (iv) change of addresses (especially, after marriage, in case of women members and after getting a job at a new place, in case of male members, (v) giving birth to child and/or getting busier with household job, (vi) illness (particularly of chronic nature, often caused by malnutrition), (vii) lack of avenues for income generating activities, or funding/credit support and/or failures in entrepreneurship (after the training received from CLCs). Factors that impeded to success of CLCs in programs such as advocacy, adult literacy, communication development, fund collection and cultural programs included lack of consciousness of the guardians, poverty, and lack of interest of the local people. Other weaknesses of the CLC operation include their 'women-centeredness', absence of 'early childhood care and education (ECCE) program, working of CLC libraries for limited time (2-3 hours a day), absence of linkage or weak linkage of CLCs with government extension services, formation of CLCs in some locations without studying them in advance for taking local peculiarities in programming or asserting appropriateness of the location.

The report presents a number of factors, which attribute to poor management and performance of CLCs and these are:

- a. DAM and CLC management did not conduct baseline survey and need assessment studies in areas of CLC operation;
- b. Dissemination and/or social mobilization at the field level is limited; children and youth are least covered in mobilization campaign;
- c. IGP activities pour only cash and CLCs do not have follow up activities;
- d. Although there is a high gender bias (75% of the members are woman), there has been little effort in women leadership development; out of school children and youths are not adequately covered in the program;
- e. Not all CLCs have enough linkage with NGOs in programs and activities; DAM does not pursue an integrated approach;
- f. CLC community workers lack managerial and professional skills; they do not have sufficient incentive; they can not/do not monitor developments; and
- g. The flow of information materials (particularly in remote areas) is irregular, which affects interests of the readers.

The report questions the sustainability of CLCs and observes that the present state of community resource mobilization, government support, and GO-NGO or NGO-NGO coordination is inadequate and also, there is no formal arrangement for such linkage and coordination.

These findings about organization and management of CLCs give some idea about the field level realities. They also imply that if these types of field realities are not anticipated in planning and designing of the CLC programs, the expectations about CLC achievements might turn out to be misleading.

III.III Impact of CLCs

Although the report presents the impact of CLCs with a positive note, it indicates that the impact observed in terms of attaining financial solvency of CLC members, their skills in reading and writing, growth in their awareness about health, development of relationship among the people in the community, conservation of environment, and employment opportunities had been 'poor'. It recorded that about 50% of the beneficiaries could improve their position in terms of financial solvency and about 67% in terms of their understanding the need for keeping the environment clean. On all other counts, according to the report, not more than one third could achieve any improvement.

As found in the report, the impact in terms of gender equity, poverty alleviation and environment conservation had been marginal. CLCs had little contribution to motivation of local people in taking their children to primary schools for basic education. The involvement in CLC activities, however, had contributed to enhance the members' social status in the community and to promote a better understanding between male and female members.

The report suggests that CLCs had positive impact in terms of skill development and income generating activities of women members thanks to their higher rate of attendance in the CLC meetings and picking up of trades such as embroidery, tailoring, cattle rearing, poultry, banana plantation and vegetable cultivation. Women members of CLCs were also seen to enjoy better status in their families.

While analyzing impact of CLCs in a separate section, the report indicated that the CLCs

- increased community awareness on the importance of education;
- increased the scope for literacy practice and for acquiring life skills;
- increased awareness about health, sanitation and environment;
- increased awareness about rights of the women and their participation in community activities;
- contributed to capacity building of the women in decision making;
- operated as forums where people learn by doing; and
- developed the capacity of CLC members to enjoy a better life.

It may be noted here that these findings (of the report) on impact have been presented as some general observations without much empirical evidence. Further, they contradict to many of the statements made in other sections of the report, especially where the report discusses weaknesses and limitations of the CLC activities.

III. III Future Directions of CLCs

The report put forward some suggestions relating to improvement in CLC management and the efficiency and impact of their operation. These are:

1. Link literacy and community development activities with CLC interventions to address socio-economic need of the target population;
2. Diversify NFE programs to match their occupational needs, suitable for adoption and adaptation to changes, creating scope for switching over to new profession;
3. Arrange wider social mobilization through innovative forms and methods;
4. Integrate learning material and learning with recreational programs;
5. Monitor through a more systematic and up to date data about the field/target people/local community;
6. Link IGP activities with market;
7. Formalize linkage with government agencies and other NGOs operating in the locality;
8. Devote more time to literacy activities and accordingly, with that purpose
 - design programs as core and non-core activities;
 - prepare baseline for each CLC catchment area;
 - arrange proper documentation for monitoring, feedback and evaluation;
 - incorporate community worker as secretary of CLC management committee;
 - improve management skills of the community workers; and
 - create a multipurpose professional/technical backstopping/support system for CLCs at the community level.

Chapter IV

Revisiting CLCs: What is New and Different From the Previous Studies?

IV.I General Observations and the Public Opinion at the Community Level

General observations and the results of discussion with different groups of people revealed a number of facts about APPEAL CLCs, the surroundings where they operate, and their impact on the members, as well as on the local community. Not everything had been found new and different from what the existing stock of knowledge suggests. The field level observations and interviews with local people of various background suggests the following:

Credibility of DAM as an NGO with Social Development Agenda

Both Narsinghdi and Jhenidah are areas where too many different NGOs operate with programs of social and economic development. Jhenidah is a special case in this regard: almost every house has a signboard of an NGO on its walls. But local people do not know much about most such NGOs, which according to them are name-only agencies having the objective of contracting in jobs of the government, large and established NGOs and foreign organizations and thereby making money through creation of make-shift field unit of ‘operators with development interventions’. Community members in the CLC operation areas, however, feel that DAM is quite different in this respect. They consider that DAM has a track record of working with community development agenda and is sincere in delivery of services through programs of literacy, continuing education, social awareness development and life skill training. At the same time, they also hold that CLCs have a number of limitations.

The Impact and Limitations of CLCs

People in CLC operation areas are positive about CLCs, which in their opinion are special type of literacy centers for rural illiterate adults, particularly for the out-of-school women. Neo-literates come to CLCs to study, read newspapers or undertake livelihood training on various skills such as poultry, cattle rearing, sewing, embroidery, tailoring, boutique, fish culture, vegetable cultivation, and nursery. According to them, CLCs are used as venue for issue-based discussions and social awareness training that increase their knowledge about human rights, consequences of dowry, early marriage, polygamy, child and women trafficking, drug addiction, drug trafficking, and HIV AIDS. Many people believe that CLCs help their members in solving different types of personal or family problems and are also convenient forums for many government agencies and NGOs in delivery of extension services, inoculations, and healthcare services. CLCs thus have positive impacts in terms of empowerment of the poor, especially of the disadvantaged rural women through a process that may be termed as ‘inclusion of the excluded’ in social and economic development efforts of government and non-government organizations.

According to observations in the field, the impact of CLCs remains much less than what could be expected because of their limitations and according to the findings,

- a. CLCs do not have adequate number of books and booklets and because the members finish reading them within a short time, they lose interest in coming to CLCs for reading one and the same materials again and again.
- b. CLCs lack in materials and equipment for games, sports and entertainment and therefore, members do not find interest in regularly attending them.

- c. CLCs are not attractive in physical set up and are not comfortable as a public place to meet or conduct group activities; a CLC is usually housed in a tin-roofed room with mud walls or bamboo fencing and the floor is made of mud; also, the CLC houses often do not have electricity.
- d. CLCs do not provide training in all the different livelihood skills and are not able to conduct issue-based discussions on all the diverse areas; In many cases, the training is largely theoretical which the trainees find difficult to absorb or to apply for income generating activities and further, the training sessions are of very short duration and in absence of repeat sessions or refresher courses, many trainees, who usually fail to apply the newly acquired skills shortly after the training, forget nearly everything they learn.
- e. CLCs have a poor outreach although community workers and supervisors are reportedly active in mobilizing members of all target households in the operation area including those of remote locations with poor accessibility.
- f. Although all CLCs have management committees in place, the members and chairmen of the management committees are not always enthusiastic about attending meetings, mobilization of funds, and contributing money or materials to CLCs.
- g. CLCs suffer from poor supervision and management because the community workers are overloaded with excessive reporting requirements and a lot of traveling and therefore, do not find enough time for overseeing all activities; In some cases, community workers or supervisors are relatives or wards of some 'powerful' local individual, often a person who provided some donations to CLC and because of this, they are not afraid of losing the CLC job; many community workers and supervisors also lack commitment because the compensation package is not very attractive against the hard labour in trying conditions.
- h. CLCs are open for members usually between 2 and 6 pm, which is inconvenient for the male members to attend; further, under the prevailing social psychology, the male members do not feel it very comfortable to be guided by a female community worker or to attend activities in which female members dominate in attendance.
- i. CLCs do not provide credit in adequate amount to support members in their entrepreneurship with the newly acquired livelihood skills.

In addition to the above, the recent trend in most CLCs, as could be gathered from the field, is a reorientation of the CLC community workers and supervisors in management of credit program albeit, not as much in supporting the income generating activities as allegedly, in generating surplus through collection of service charges/interest. According to the informed opinion, the beginning of this trend has an association with withdrawal of UNESCO funding support from the CLCs.

The observations about the impact of CLCs ultimately lead to a mixed feeling. CLCs are partially useful, are good in developing social awareness, but have only limited contribution in literacy, continuing education, and life skills training. Only about 20% of CLC members (almost exclusively, female) are regular in attending CLC programs and CLCs do have impact on their lives. The impact of CLCs on other members is limited largely because, most of them are only 'members in the list' and others among the remaining members are very casual in participation in CLC activities. This restricts CLCs to have a substantial impact at the community level. CLCs could hardly become institutions to which the local community has a strong belongingness and yet, can claim some success in operating as forums through which DAM itself, other NGOs and many government organizations deliver community development services. The difficulties in running all CLCs effectively and making all of them sustainable include among others, inadequate funding support to CLC programs and activities, poor participation of members and the community, and lack of efficiency and commitment of the community workers and CLC management committees.

IV.II Results of the Questionnaire-based Sample Survey of CLC Beneficiaries

The findings from analysis of the questionnaire-based sample survey of CLC project beneficiaries as presented in this part of the report are to be looked at with certain precautions. The CLCs in the two survey areas, Narsinghdi and Jhenidah are different in performance and in the nature and extent of impact from DAM CLCs in general and further, the CLCs of the two different locations also vary in these counts. The findings therefore, are presented in two separate subsections.

These findings, although are based on analysis of survey data, reflect only a partial and not comprehensive picture about the impact of CLCs in the two survey areas because of a number of reasons. In administering the questionnaires, the field investigators found it difficult to locate all members listed in CLC membership rolls and the way out resorted to was to pick the samples randomly from among those members who regularly attend CLC programs or could be 'made available' by the CLC community workers to attend CLCs during the survey period.

Upon considerable inquiry and applying the 'best guess hypothesis', it is estimated that only 20% of the CLC members appearing in the membership roll are regular in CLCs operating in Raipura, Narsinghdi. In Jhenidah, the figure is a little higher. The names of all other members only appear in the CLC registers, partly because the community members require to have 100 members with a female-male ratio of 75-25 in a CLC and largely because, after registering their names in CLCs, the members do not turn up at all or very soon discontinue/become highly irregular in attending them. Members other than the regular ones are 'drop-outs', who are not replaced in most cases.

The above considerations, however, do not necessarily mean that the results are not acceptable at all. Instead, the findings may be taken as those relating to the impact of APPEAL CLCs on members who are regular or near regular in participation in CLC activities. These findings also have relevance in terms of CLC impact, although in a limited scale on the local community, as well as on other circles.

Findings in Raipura, Narsinghdi

Members participate in different CLC activities at varied degrees (see table 4.1). All the 30 members interviewed take part in literacy/continuing education program (for an average of about 75 minutes a day) and spend considerable time (from 35 to 55 minutes a day) in reading newspapers and books or using the CLC library.

Table 4.1 Participation in CLC programs/activities

Activity and unit of measurement	Value
Literacy training/continuing education [% of members]	100%
Reading newspapers [average time (hours a day) per member]	50 minutes
Use of library [average time (hours a day) per member]	55 minutes
Reading books/booklets [average time (hours a day) per member]	35 minutes
Training on income generation skills [% of members]	20%
Microcredit ([% of members]	83%
Discussion on family/community problems [% of members]	80%
Discussion on environmental issues [% of members]	80%
Discussion on healthcare [% of members]	43%

More than 80% of regular CLC members participate in the microcredit program (50% of the members took loan only once, and 30% twice), 80% of the members attend discussions on family

and community problems, and environment, 43% take part in discussions on healthcare. Almost every member got training on one or more income generating skills and on quality of life, although the number of members who recently received training on income generating skills accounted for 20%. Nearly all members participate in CLC organized cultural programs and events in the observance of national and international days.

Important areas of training on income generating activities, in order of preference by the CLC members in participation, are growing vegetables, poultry, nursery, fish culture, livestock rearing, sewing, candle-making, trading, and handicrafts (see table 4.2). The areas of training on quality of life are awareness about social issues, relationship among men and women in the community, environment conservation and leadership development. The issues of social awareness training organized by CLCs for its members include consequences of early marriage and dowry, human rights and the rights of women and children, sanitation and primary healthcare, family planning, and the importance of sending children to school.

Table 4.2 Participation in training

Type of Training	No of participants (in a year)	Associate organizations	
Income generation activities	Growing vegetables	23 (76.7%)	DAM, DYD, DAE, Prokritajan
	Poultry	21 (70%)	DAM, DYD, DAE, DSW, Prokritajan
	Nursery	18 (60%)	DYD, DAE, Prokritajan
	Fish culture	13 (43.3%)	DAM, DOF
	Livestock rearing	11 (36.7%)	DAM, DLS, DAE
	Sewing	10 (33.3%)	DAM, DYD
	Candle-making	10 (33.3%)	DAM, DYD
	Small trade	6 (20%)	DAM, BRAC
	Handicraft	1 (3.3%)	DAM,
	Boutique	1 (3.3%)	DYD
Quality of life	Social issues	29 (96.7%)	DAM, DYD
	Men-women relationship	28 (93.3%)	DAM
	Environment conservation	27 (90%)	DAM, Prokritajan
	Leadership	15 (50%)	DAM

The training is conducted at the CLC premises and CLCs receive cooperation from government agencies (such as DYD, DAE, DLS, DOF), national level NGOs (such as BRAC) and local NGOs (such as Prokritajan). The duration of formal training in both income generation activities and quality of life are relatively short (see table 4.3) but in fact, resource persons occasionally visit CLCs and the training continues in informal sessions. The training had an impact on the CLC members in terms of change of their occupation. Of the 29 married women members, who were housewives before they had received training, 19 reported to have new occupation: 9 started small business, 4 started homestead farming, 5 took handicrafts or preparation of food items for selling and 1 became a wage employee in a local small enterprise.

Members who regularly attend CLC programs get the largest benefit apparently in terms of attaining the literacy skills (see table 4.4). 20% of the CLC members belong to the category STG

in terms (they already have literacy of level A or grade V). Thanks to attending CLCs, 17% of the PTG members achieved literacy of level A, 30% of them has achieved level B (grade IV), 27% level C (grade III), 3% level D (grade II), and 3% level E (grade I).

Table 4.3 Duration of Training

Type of Training		Number of Participants by duration (hours)			
		1 – 3	4 – 5	6 – 8	9 – 10
Income generation activities	Growing vegetables	10	10	1	2
	Poultry	8	11	1	1
	Nursery	5	7	6	-
	Fish culture	8	4	1	-
	Livestock rearing	7	3	1	-
	Sewing	5	3	1	1
	Candle-making	2	3	4	1
	Small trade	5	1	-	-
	Handicraft	1	-	-	-
Boutique	1	-	-	-	
Quality of life	Social issues	5	16	8	-
	Men-women relationship	5	11	9	3
	Environment conservation	4	14	9	-
	Leadership	3	6	6	-

Table 4.4 Benefits of members from CLC Programs

Indicator		No of members (%)
Literacy	Level	
	STG	6 (20%)
	A	5 (16.7%)
	B	9 (30%)
	C	8 (26.7%)
	D	1 (3.3%)
Increase in monthly income (after joining CLC)	Range (Taka)	
	Up to 700	7 (23.3%)
	701 – 1000	12 (40%)
	1001 – 1500	8 (26.7%)
	1501 – 2000	3 (10%)
Elevation of status in the family	Degree	
	High	13 (43.3%)
	Moderate	14 (46.7%)
	Small	3 (10%)

Thanks to participation in CLC training programs on income generating activities (and presumably, use of loans taken from CLCs), 23% of the regular CLC members could increase their monthly income by amounts up to Tk 700, while 40% by amounts between Tk 701 and 1000, about 27% between Tk 1001 and 1500 and 10% between Tk 1500 and 2000.

Literacy, increase in social and community awareness, and in the monthly income contributed to enhancement of CLC women members in their families. According to the survey findings, about 43% women members now feel that their status in the family was raised to a high degree, about 47% feel that the elevation of their status in the family was moderate and only 10% hold that the elevation was insignificant. The Women CLC members have developed confidence in many areas, including especially primary healthcare, taking care of the family and taking part in the decision making process at the household and community level, speaking out to ensure rights in the society, handling small business transactions, guiding children, and participating in community development work.

According to the opinion of the CLC members in Narsinghdi, the CLC activities that are most useful to them are literacy (non-formal education), training on income-generating activities, micro-credit, and group discussion (see table 4.5). CLCs conduct many other activities but the members consider them less important. The feeling that the CLC is a useful institution in these (and other non-revealed) aspects contributes to development of a sense of belongingness of the members to CLCs.

Table 4.5 CLC activities that are most useful to members

Activity	Weighted frequency
Non-formal education	27
Training on Income generation skills	15
Micro-credit	13
Group discussion	12
Child education	4
Cultural programs	4
Consultation/advice	4

But when asked what activities have the highest impact on the community as a whole, the CLC members named different set of these activities in a changed order. For example, they hold that CLCs made them aware about the consequences of early marriage and dowry and organize discussions in which they all (both male and female of varied age and status) sit and talk together. They consider that these two things are the most useful for their community living. Other activities having an impact on the community are training on healthcare issues, sanitation and cleanliness, consultation, inoculations, and micro-credit.

4.6 CLC activities that are most useful to the community

Activity	Weighted frequency
Campaign on awareness about consequences of early marriage and dowry	16
Sitting together to discuss matters in a group	15
Training on healthcare	9
Training on sanitation and cleanliness	5
Consultation	5
Inoculation	4
Micro-credit	3

CLC members think that their status in the community was enhanced because of their taking part in CLC activities such as the CLC training on quality of life (weighted frequency – 18), non-

formal education (17), training on income generation activities (6), reading newspapers and periodicals (5), and micro-credit (3).

In addition to direct impact, CLCs have some indirect impact on the local communities, largely because of the interactions of CLC members, the CLC staff and the members of the CLC management committee. The factors that contribute to the process are indicated in table 4.7.

Table 4.7 CLC activities that enhanced consciousness of the local people

Factor	Weighted frequency
Interaction of the motivated CLC members with local community	17
Local cooperation in CLC activities	6
Grameen Shalish	5
Cultural programs organized by CLCs	5
Business transactions of CLC members with local people	4

CLC members are not responsive in indicating factors that impede the proper functioning of CLCs. They however, mentioned some of such factors, as well as a number of other factors that can contribute to improvement in CLC operation. Listed in table 4.8 and 4.9 these factors are to be taken into consideration for defining future direction of CLCs.

4.8 Factors causing loss in efficiency of CLC activities

Factor	Frequency
Shortage of books and other reading materials	3
Shortage of materials for games and sports	3
Shortage of furniture	1
Problem of space in CLC houses	1

4.9 Factors that contribute to effective operation of CLCs

Factor	Frequency
Financial assistance by local people	16
Cooperation of the local people in conducting programs	15
Cooperation of government and non-government agencies	13
Increased community awareness	6

Findings in Jhenidah

CLC members who are regular in attendance of CLC programs take part in all the various types of activities. The participation is maximum (all members) in non-formal education, training in quality of life, and cultural programs. The participation was observed a little less in reading newspapers/periodicals and books/booklets and consequently, in using CLC libraries. If the participation level is considered high in the above programs, it is medium in income generating activities and low in micro-credit (see table 4.10).

Table 4.10 Participation in CLC programs/activities

Activity	Participation (member days)
Literacy training/continuing education	66
Reading newspapers	53
Use of library	52
Reading books/booklets	52
Training on income generation skills	40
Micro-credit	19
Discussion on family/community problems	66
Discussion on environmental issues	66
Discussion on healthcare	66
Cultural programs	66

Important areas of training on income generating activities, in order of preference by the CLC members in participation are poultry, growing vegetables, livestock rearing, sewing, nursery, fish culture, small trade, handicrafts, and candle-making (see table 4.11). The areas of training on quality of life are awareness about social issues, relationship among men and women in the community, environment conservation and leadership development. The issues of social awareness training organized by CLCs for its members include consequences of early marriage and dowry, human rights and the rights of women and children, sanitation and primary healthcare, family planning, and the importance of sending children to school.

Table 4.11 Participation in training

Type of Training	No of participants (in a year)	Associate organizations
Income generation activities	Poultry	18 (100%) DAM, DYD
	Growing vegetables	15 (83.3%) DAM, BRAC, Srijani
	Livestock rearing	12 (66.7%) DYD, DAM
	Sewing	10 (55.6%) DAM
	Nursery	9 (50%) DAM, DYD, Srijani
	Fish culture	8 (44.4%) DYD, DOF
	Small trade	5 (27.8%) DAM
	Handicraft	3 (16.7%) DAM
	Candle-making	1 (5.6%) DAM,
Quality of life	Men-women relationship	18 (100%) DAM
	Social issues	12 (66.7%) DAM
	Environment conservation	12 (66.7%) DAM
	Leadership	12 (66.7%) DAM

The training is conducted at the CLC premises and CLCs receive cooperation from government agencies (such as DYD, DOF), national level NGOs (such as BRAC) and local NGOs (such as Srijani). The duration of formal training in both income generation activities and quality of life are relatively short (see table 4.12) but in fact, resource persons occasionally visit CLCs and the training continues in informal sessions. The training had an impact on the CLC members in terms of change of their occupation. Of the 18 married women members, who were housewives before

they had received training, 10 reported to have new occupation: 6 started small business, 1 started homestead farming, and 3 took other self-employment activities.

Members who regularly attend CLC programs get the largest benefit apparently in terms of attaining the literacy skills (see table 4.13). Thanks to attending CLCs, 39% of the PTG members achieved literacy of level A (grade V), 39% of them has achieved level B (grade IV), 11% level C (grade III), and 11% level D (Grade II).

Table 4.12 Duration of Training

Type of Training		Number of Participants by duration (hours)			
		1 – 3	4 – 5	6 – 8	9 – 10
Income generation activities	Poultry	3	11	-	4
	Growing vegetables	10	4	1	-
	Livestock rearing	2	5	5	-
	Sewing	3	4	2	1
	Nursery	6	3	-	-
	Fish culture	6	2	-	-
	Small trade	3	1	1	-
	Handicraft	3	-	-	-
	Candle-making	-	-	1	-
Quality of life	Social issues	2	10	6	-
	Men-women relationship	8	3	1	-
	Environment conservation	8	3	1	-
	Leadership	8	2	2	-

Table 4.13 Benefits of members from CLC Programs

Indicator		No of members (%)
Literacy	Level	
	A	7 (39%)
	B	7 (39%)
	C	2 (11%)
	D	2 (11%)
Increase in monthly income (after joining CLC)	Range (Taka)	
	Up to 500	5 (27.8%)
	501 – 1000	6 (33.3%)
	1001 – 1500	6 (33.3%)
	1501 – 2000	1 (5.6%)
Elevation of status in the family	Degree	
	High	16 (88.9%)
	Moderate	11 (11.1%)

Thanks to participation in CLC training programs on income generating activities (and presumably, use of loans taken from CLCs), 28% of the regular CLC members could increase their monthly income by amounts up to Tk 500, while 33% by amounts between Tk 501 and 1000, another 33% between Tk 1001 and 1500, and 5% between Tk 1500 and 2000.

Literacy, development of social and community awareness, and increase in the monthly income of CLC women members contributed to enhancement of their status in their families. According to the survey findings, about 89% women members now feel that their status in the family was raised to a high degree, and 11% feel that the elevation of their status in the family was moderate. The women CLC members have developed confidence in many areas, including especially primary healthcare, taking care of the family, participation in the decision making process at the household and community level, speaking out to ensure rights in the society, handling small business transactions, guiding children, and participating in community development work.

According to the opinion of the CLC members in Jhenidah, the CLC activities that are most useful to them are literacy (non-formal education) and awareness development programs (see table 4.14). They found other CLC activities such as training, use of library, group discussion or cultural programs less important.

Table 4.14 CLC activities that are most useful to members

Activity	Weighted frequency
Non-formal education	10
Awareness development	7
Training (both IGA and quality of life)	4
Reading newspapers and books	3
Group discussion	2
Cultural programs	1

But when asked what activities have the highest impact on the community as a whole, the CLC members of Jhenidah named different set of these activities in a changed order. Their list (in order of priority in this regard) includes adult education, use of library, training, cultural functions and group discussion. They believe that CLCs made them aware about the consequences of early marriage, polygamy and dowry, increased their consciousness about healthcare, nutrition, cleanliness, use of pure drinking water and environment, improved their ability to take decisions at family level, handle business problems, assist children, and cooperate with other members in the community.

Women CLC members think that their status in the family was raised because of their increased ability to manage household affairs and assist children, generate additional income, and consult husbands in their business.

In addition to direct impact, CLCs have some indirect impact on the local communities largely because of the interactions of CLC members, the CLC staff and the members of the CLC management committee. The factors that contribute to the process are indicated in table 4.15.

Table 4.15 CLC activities that enhanced consciousness of the local people

Factor	Weighted frequency
CLC activities that increase community consciousness and social integrity	7
Local cooperation in CLC activities	5
Tree plantation	3
Health and sanitation programs	2

CLC members in Jhenidah did not respond to the question regarding factors that contributes to the improvement of CLC operation but were responsive in indicating factors that impede the proper functioning of CLCs. These factors are listed in table 4.16 and can be taken into consideration for defining future direction of CLCs.

4.16 Factors causing loss in efficiency of CLC activities

Factor	Frequency
Poor monitoring and follow-up of neo-literates	3
Poor Supervision and lack of commitment of the community workers	2
Shortage of materials for games and sports	3
Lack of cooperation of the locally important persons	3

IV.III Case Studies

In addition to conducting the questionnaire-based sample survey of CLC project beneficiaries at Narsinghdi and Jhenidah, personal level discussion was conducted at Raipura, Narsinghdi to understand the nature and scale of benefits from CLCs. Such discussion sessions could be held with quite a large number of individual CLC members, three community workers and a local patron of CLC. These are not case studies proper and are rather, interviews for gathering personal accounts of the individuals met in order to have some idea about how they look at CLCs, what are the most important types of benefits they receive from this institution, and what impact the CLCs have in their lives. Following is a summary of the outcome of these discussion sessions:

Member: *Niranjana Rani Majumdar (16)*
Center: Madhuchhanda, Karaitala, Raipura
Literacy level at present: grade B

Niranjana, a girl of a poor family and the daughter of an illiterate father was deprived of primary education because of poverty. Thanks to participation in CLC activities, she can now read and write and can count numbers. Her father is now convinced that she should not be married away until she attains 18 years of age. In CLC she was given training on poultry, cow rearing and plantation. She established a small poultry farm with a loan from DAM. Niranjana is now the only literate member in the family, other members of which now depend on her for important decisions and advice. She gets some assistance from her elder brother in managing the poultry farm, while at the same time she helps him in attaining literacy and numeracy skills. The farm has become a practical training place for him. Thanks to all these, Niranjana now enjoys an elevated status in the family and neighborhood.

Member: *Lutfa Begum (30)*
Center: Madhuchhanda, Karaitala, Raipura
Literacy level at present: grade E

Lutfa, the mother of two boys and a girl was left with no earning member in the family when her husband died 4 years ago. She was illiterate and did not have any idea about how to maintain the family or where to earn livelihood. She went to Prokritijan, a local NGO that gave her the training on livestock farming and also some loan to start a mini livestock farm. Then she became a member of CLC, which taught her the elementary skills of reading, writing and counting. For Lutfa, CLC is the place where she can discuss problems relating to her household and her farm with other members of her community. CLC made her aware about the importance of taking the children to school and at present, they go to school. She now knows for sure that she is not going to marry away her daughter before she reaches 18 years of age. She works hard and suffers from malnutrition. Her six-year daughter is aware about the problem, although Lutfa, with her small income can do a little about it.

Member: *Khaleda Akhter (16)*
Center: Madhuchhanda, Karaitala, Raipura
Literacy level at present: grade C

Khaleda, the fourth daughter of a poor and illiterate father having seven children once attended a regular primary school, where she studied up to grade five. Her formal education ended there because of poverty and later, when she came to CLC, her literacy level was equivalent to just grade three. Treated as an STG (secondary target group) member in the CLC, she attends continuing education programs, especially, the social awareness development, issue-based

discussion, and vocational skills training. In the CLC she can watch TV, but cannot read newspapers and periodicals, which she says, are read by the male visitors and not all of them are CLC members. Participation in CLC activities helped her mainly in developing awareness about her rights and responsibilities, as well as about the importance of conservation of the environment.

Member: *Rokeya Khatun (35)*
Center: Madhuchhanda, Karaitala, Raipura
Literacy level at present: grade B

Rokeya is a housewife and a mother of three children. As her husband is dumb, she is to take care of most responsibilities in the family. Motivated by CLC community worker, she decided to become a CLC member for basic literacy and more importantly, for learning how to keep household accounts. Thanks to participation in CLC, she is convinced that the family is to be kept small and although she has three daughters, she should not try to have more children in an effort to have a son. She now firmly believes that girls can be as good as boys for the family and if there is any problem, the CLC is there to advice and provide some help.

Member: *Sabita Rani Das (20)*
Center: Rupashi, Boalmara, Raipura
Literacy level at present: Grade A

Sabita, married with a young man running a laundry shop is the mother of a son and a daughter. She attended formal education in a primary school up to grade two, had to discontinue studies, and was married away at an early age. She came to know about CLC from some women in the neighborhood, who informed her that she could be benefited from CLC through its non-formal education program, training in livelihood activities, and the micro-credit. She attended five training courses at CLC and received Tk 9000 as loan in two installments. She spent Tk 3000 of the first installment in setting a tube-well and gave Tk 6000 of the second installment to her husband for upgrading the laundry shop. This has elevated her status in the family, especially in decision making at least at the household level. Her prime objective of being a CLC member was to get loan but she now understands that CLC helped her in developing knowledge and awareness about the rights of women, consequences of early marriage, the forms and methods of ensuring better healthcare and nutrition, and the importance of maintaining cleanliness and conserving environment.

Member: *Kajal Rani Das (22)*
Center: Rupashi, Boalmara, Raipura
Literacy level at present: Grade B

Kajal treats CLC as a cooperative center, where she takes training on various skills and participates in programs of social awareness development. She even contributes some money to share CLC expenditures in conducting its activities. She had to leave formal primary school when she was a pupil of grade two there but now at CLC, she continues studies under its literacy program and in addition, regularly takes part in issue-based discussions. She also disseminates all newly acquired knowledge to members of her family and to others in the community. She claims that her father gave up smoking because she could successfully convince him.

Member: Rawshanara Begum (35)
Center: Samya, Boalmara, Raipura
Literacy level at present: Grade B

Rawshanara studied at a primary school and completed grade four, but because she did not have any practice in reading or writing for a long time, she relapsed into illiteracy much before she got married. A mother of one boy and three girls at present, she could revive her literacy skills thanks to participation in CLC programs. She also got some livelihood training and loan from CLC that contributed significantly in elevating her status in the family and also in changing her own ideas about life. She runs a poultry farm and is happy with the income flows. She expressed her desire to make her second daughter a doctor.

Member: Rajia Begum (27)
Center: Samya, Boalmara, Raipura
Literacy level at present: Grade A

Rajia, an illiterate woman before joining CLC took only three years to earn grade A (grade five) in the literacy training. CLC helped her in making aware about the problems of a carrying mother and trained her on how to take care of new-borne baby. With a loan from the CLC, she runs a mini poultry farm in her house and is also rearing cows. She pays Tk 5 a month to CLC as her contribution to payment of the bills for newspaper, which she reads at the CLC. She enjoys participation in programs organized by CLCs in observance of national and international days.

Member: Nurjahan Begum (47)
Center: Samya, Boalmara, Raipura
Literacy level at present: Grade C

Nurjahan has a daughter and two adult sons. She never went to school but learnt how to read the Quran at home. She became a member of the CLC for getting loan and during the four years with CLC, she learnt how to read and write. She intends to assist her daughter in studies up to masters level in the university. She now understands the importance of marriage registration, usefulness of inoculations, and the role of mutual consultation for settlement of disputes or solving family and household problems.

Member: Asma Begum (23)
Center: Purbasha, Karaitala, Raipura
Literacy level at present: SSC

Asma begum is a literate young woman, who passed SSC examinations some six years ago and now attends CLC almost everyday primarily to read newspapers and periodicals. During her past four year with CLC, she underwent training on livelihood skills and on community development. She became a CLC member for getting DAM loans for income generating activities. She said, she had got the required training and also the loan, using which she could enhance income. She is also a more enlightened citizen now with better awareness about healthcare and the environment. According to her, CLC made the local people conscious about many things and the most important among them is about the use of safe drinking water thanks to which the people in the locality do not suffer from diarrhea anymore.

Member: Shila Rani Biswas (22)
Center: Purbasha, Karaitala, Raipura
Literacy level at present: Grade C

Shila, the wife of a poor peasant joined the CLC as an illiterate member and after three years she attained a literacy level equivalent to grade three. Earlier, she had little idea about sanitation norms and primary healthcare practices. But now she is conscious about these and also about the environment. She thinks that the CLC has had a positive impact on her lifestyle as well as on her family. She took loan from DAM through CLC and invested the money in cultivation of vegetables. The produce is sufficient enough to meet the demands of her family and to make repayment of the loan out of the net savings (i.e., the difference between the expenses not incurred in purchase of vegetables from the market and the cost of their production at the kitchen garden). Shila believes that CLC promotes development of a good understanding among the people of different religious beliefs.

Member: Nurjahan Khatun (57)
Center: Bikash, Jahangirnagar, Raipura
Literacy Level at Preset: D

Noorjahan, a lonely woman whose husband and all children died. She became a CLC member four years ago and attained the skill of reading, writing and numeracy of a level equivalent to grade two. She can read newspapers with some difficulty. CLC is a comfortable place for her to spend time talking with others and participating in various activities, especially the community awareness training and issue-based discussions. She helps others with her experience of life and promotes development of their knowledge and skill in taking care of pregnant women, mother and child healthcare, and keeping the house and the homestead area clean.

Member: Afroza Begum (30)
Center: Bikash, Jahangirnagar, Raipura
Literacy Level at Preset: D

Afroza, a poor housewife and an illiterate woman (before joining the CLC) can now read and write and solve elementary arithmetic problems. Training in CLC helped her in developing confidence in expressing personal views and opinions and she is not shy about talking to any person with any level of literacy or other qualifications. She undertook community awareness development training, as well as some livelihood skills training at the CLC and also took loan from DAM through the center. She now owns a sewing machine and earns about Tk 4000 a month.

Member: Iktar Khatun (24)
Center: Bikash, Jahangirnagar, Raipura
Literacy Level at Preset: C

Iktar, an illiterate young woman (before joining the CLC) sees the CLC as a good place to come at the leisure time and discuss with others the various matters relating to personal, household or community problems. She says, gossiping in someone's house or somewhere in or around the homestead area is highly unorganized and often do not lead to constructive conclusions. Sometimes such meetings even work as breeding grounds for developing misunderstanding and disputes. In addition to serving as an alternative forum, CLCs help members in acquiring literacy and life skills training. She is personally benefited by attaining literacy and participating in the CLC's cooperative savings scheme.

Community worker: Shaila Akhter (29)
Center: Purbasha, Karaitala, Raipura
Education: BA

Shaila Akhter works as the community worker of the local CLC since its inception. She cannot finish her daily work within the CLC working schedule of 3-hours a day. Too often she leaves the office late in the afternoon and even at home, she receives visitors, the local men and women who come to discuss their problems with her and seek advice. At the office, in the community (i.e., the field), and at home Shaila is a guide and friend to CLC members, as well as to others who participate in CLC activities.

Community worker: Sabita Rani Das (25)
Center: Rupashi, Boalmara, Raipura
Education: S.S.C.

Sabita is serving the local CLC as its community worker for about four years. She works 7-8 hours a day, although she knows that a CLC community worker is supposed to work only 3 hours a day. She tries hard to discharge her responsibilities, which are often too heavy as the workload. She is not happy with the job because of the low honorarium (Tk 500 a month) but she hangs with it because she does not have any alternative earning opportunity.

Community worker: Maya Islam (30)
Center: Madhuchhanda, Karaitala, Raipura
Education: S.S.C.

Maya, the wife of a Bangladeshi expatriate worker in an Arab country, decided to work as a CLC community worker with a monthly honorarium of Tk 600 a month and it was her expectation that the honorarium would be enhanced later. She is now frustrated with the job since after withdrawal of the UNESCO funding support to CLCs, the monthly honorarium became Tk 500. She feels that a CLC community worker has a heavy workload that includes record keeping (maintenance and updating of up to 11 different registers), conducting sessions of literacy classes for CLC members of different grades, assisting members in solving their problems through meetings at CLC and outside (e.g., in the houses of CLC members), coordinating and managing issue-based discussion or training programs, and visiting DAM area offices and the offices of government service providers or other NGOs.

Local patron of CLC: Md. Habibur Rahman (55)
Center: Mitali, Boalmara, Raipura

Habib, an ex-civil engineer of the Department of Roads and Highways, Government of Bangladesh believes that if someone is educated, it is better for him to have educated neighbours. He donated 4 decimals of land for the CLC house. He takes great interest in CLC activities and sometimes, he even works as a voluntary replacement community worker when the regular one goes out of station. At present, the center operates as CRC for 14 CLCs. Habib feels that local people should have more active participation in funding and promoting activities of institutions like the DAM CLCs.

IV.IV Formal DAM Position on CLC Activities and Performance

Before drawing conclusions on this effort in CLC evaluation, an attempt was taken to collect the formal opinion of DAM officials on important features, performance, and the impacts of CLCs. This was done through analysis of the CLC evaluation document prepared by its program coordinator, other official documents of DAM, and the responses of DAM officials to an information schedule (a relatively long list of queries on the evaluation agenda) prepared for the purpose on the basis of review of literature, including reports and documents on the CLC program.

In outlining the general objectives, the CLC project proposal (PP) committed to organize CLC operations for delivery of literacy services, continuing education facilities, life skills training and community development, all for poverty alleviation and improvement of the quality of life. The specific objectives of the project, as indicated in the PP include establishment of CLCs with adequate physical structure, materials and equipment and management set up and implementation of multidimensional activities for attaining the general objectives. The PP also contained a number of expected effects (not impacts) of CLC operations.

DAM action plan for CLC for the year 1999 (year-I of the project) included activities for establishment of CLCs, supply of reading/learning materials to them, development of local management structure, designing training courses and enabling CLCs to network with government agencies and NGOs. Other activities planned for the year I were cultural programs (5 events in each of the 45 CLCs), gender training for CLC members (1 in each CLC), orientation session for the CLC management committee members (1 in each CLC), and a program of gender sensitization for local school teachers, CLC community workers, union council chairmen and government social welfare officials working in the CLC operation areas (1 in each of 16 selected CLCs). DAM headquarters claim that the planned activities could be implemented in due time and DAM had achieved the year-I targets by 100%.

Proposed activities of the year-II (2000) of the project included

- a. continuation of post-literacy program and the reading/learning services in all CLCs;
- b. recreational activities (all CLCs);
- c. group meetings for social empowerment through discussion on issues such as human rights, child and women trafficking, environment conservation, and arsenic contamination of water (1 meeting in each of the 45 CLCs);
- d. entrepreneurship development training (2 CLC members from each of 10 selected CLCs);
- e. training of CLC members on micro-finance (60 members), non-formal education for out-of-school children (20 CLCs);
- f. training of CLC community workers on environment conservation (25 CLCs), advanced literacy course (15 CLCs), primary healthcare (20 CLCs), local fund mobilization (10 CLCs), and early childhood education (15 CLCs);
- g. management training of the community workers and the members of the CLC management committees (45 CLCs);
- h. gender sensitization training (8 school-based programs);
- i. supply of tube-well (25 units) and sanitary latrine (50 units) in the CLC operation areas;
- j. restructuring of 3 CLCs into community resource centers (CRCs); and
- k. networking with services of other agencies (5 type of services, all CLCs).

According to the official CLC implementation records prepared by DAM, all these activities had been implemented in the year-II of the project. The list suggests that many of these activities are related to capacity building in CLCs and although a good number of them were meant directly for

the CLC members, the program coverage was small and therefore, could not be expected to have much effect and consequently, the impact.

Activities planned for the year-III (2001) of the project are also largely addressed to institution building (improvement of physical facilities/restructuring of 24 CLCs, capacity development for training on income generation activities and vocational skills, management training of the members of the CLC management committees, linkage with other services, and strengthening CRCs). The two special types of activities addressed directly to serve the CLC members in the year-III were the training of selected CLC members on income generating activities/vocational skills and enterprise development training to selected newly literate women CLC members (24 women). Meanwhile, although not explicitly mentioned in the DAM action plan for CLCs and the DAM official document on evaluation of them, the routine CLC programs such as the continuing education, use of library, issue-based discussions, and cultural programs were supposed to continue. It may be apprehended that DAM prepared these two types of documents with the focus on utilization of the project funds to 'best justify the budgeted expenditures'. These documents lack focus on programs having benefits for the members and the impact of the CLC activities. If this is true, the case only reflects a general trend in the aid supported projects in Bangladesh, where a major portion of the funds go to institution building, including management costs (a different issue though is the efficiency in utilization of the fund in terms of real capacity development) and only a small part of the project funds are spent directly for the benefit of the target group population.

A review of the CLC training programs in Raipura (Narsinghdi) and Jhenidah suggests that these programs are mainly for the CLC community workers, the members of the CLC management committees and CLC supervisors and other CLC staff. Training of CLC members in income generating activities or entrepreneurship development appears only as some insignificant activities in the CLC training schedules.

Getting an official response from DAM on a list of quarries was considered helpful in preparing the present report. Keeping this in mind, a relatively detailed list was given to the CLC program coordinator after a discussion with DAM's deputy executive director, who proposed that the response to the quarries would be made in the form of a written document that would reflect the collective position of DAM. The idea was communicated to the CLC program coordinator, who was then given the list of quarries to be met with use of empirical evidence/facts from the grassroots, district/regional/central level. They took nearly a month only to inform that they had been working hard to prepare the responses to the quarries, some of which they were yet to comprehend, and it would take more time to do the job. After being informed that it is already too late and possibly, the new CLC evaluation report might ultimately indicate that DAM was not responsive, the program coordinator and his assistants asked for another week's time, at the end of which they handed over an unsigned write up. The responses to quarries, as found in the write-up were simplistic, general and incomplete and to some extent, reflect wishful thinking. From the write up it may be apprehended that the DAM headquarters do not have adequate information about what is happening in the CLCs at grassroots level or, even if the information is there, the DAM officials are either unable to comprehend them or reluctant in sharing with outside people, including consultants.

Given this background, it was considered safe to present them as it is without editing the content of the responses and also trying to interpret them. Following are the quarries to DAM and the corresponding DAM responses to them:

Quarry 1:

What statistics we have about the APPEAL supported CLCs? [Number of CLCs by geographical locations (districts, upazilas), years of establishments, types (in case they are not the same in terms of the services they offer, the service delivery mechanism, or by any other criteria); membership (along with trends in the changes of the membership numbers by gender, age-group etc); Number of members discontinuing to attend CLC programs (figures by gender and by years); Training programs (name of training, average duration of training period and number of participants by gender in these training programs); Regular DAM staff in managing the CLCs (at various levels) and operating CLCs (by positions); Funding and other support to CLCs; Types and numbers of books and other reading materials and variations in stock of them in CLCs; Any other major information of general or special importance].

Response:

45 CLCs (1999-2000), 38 CLCs (2000-2001); Narsinghdi district, Raipura, through DAM's direct support; CLCs have two types of members – primary target group (75%) and secondary target group (25%); women members comprise 75%; number of members discontinuing – nil. Training programs are:

Training at Raipura

Name of the training	Duration (days)	Number of participants
Foundation training for community workers (CW)	10	45
Foundation training for teachers of community development centers	10	15
Foundation training for teachers of non-formal education	10	10
Monthly refresher training (CW)	1	45
Monthly refresher training (CDC teacher)	1	15
Monthly refresher training (NFE teacher)	1	10
Basic management training (Chairman CLC management committee)	3	45
Capacity development training (Chairman, CLC)	2	45
Entrepreneurship development (2 women members, from each of 20 CLCs)	10	20
Foundation training (CWs of CRCs)	4	3
Advance literacy course (CW)	6	20
Training on environment related issues (CW)	4	25
Training on primary healthcare (CW)	6	20
Training on men-women relationship (CW)	6	45
Training on men-women relationship (school program)	4	4 schools
Training on management (CLC management committee members)	3	120
Orientation of CLC management committee members	1	135
Leadership development training (CLC management committee members)	6	135
Social forestry (orientation of CW)	1	45
Training of CLC office staff	10	5
Training on awareness about arsenic contamination (2 CLC members from each of 45 CLCs)	2	90
Training of traditional birth attendants	10	20
Vocational skill training	7 – 14	96
Entrepreneurship development (CLC members)	10	24
Training on men-women relationship (CLC members)	6	4500

Training at Jhenidah

Name of the training	Duration (days)	Number of participants
Foundation training for community workers (CW)	10	12
Training on management (CLC management committee members)	3	50
Basic management training (Chairman CLC management committee)	3	45
Entrepreneurship development	10	30
Training on environment related issues (CW)	6	50
Training on men-women relationship (CW)	6	50
Leadership development training (CLC management committee members)	6	50

Quarry 2

Do you consider that CLCs operate as practical alternative learning centers (as substitute or complementary to (a) formal literacy programs in government and private schools, and (b) literacy programs implemented by NGOs)? Why? [Describe separately for (a) and (b)].

Response

Yes; people who cannot enroll themselves in formal schools now are given non-formal education in CLCs as the alternative literacy centers, which also provide life skills training based on local demands; CLCs are different from the formal education network and from the NGOs in delivery of literacy services; CLC members can borrow books from the centers.

Quarry 3

What are the service delivery modes in CLCs for literacy and life skill training, awareness building, empowerment etc? [traditional education, substitution of formal schools, training in economic skills at classroom environment/real life situation, meetings/group discussions etc.; whether groups are informal and spontaneous or they are organized by CLCs, self-directed learning, study facilitated by audio-visual materials ie, with use of films, dramas etc]

Response

CLCs have a participatory mode of service delivery, use focus group discussions and take personal care of each member; CLCs use folk drama, rallies, discussion meetings, songs, paintings and wall magazines.

Quarry 4

Whether CLC activities are relevant and useful in the local, regional and national setting?

Response

CLC activities are implemented in the light of local demands and through local initiatives; many organizations including the partner NGOs replicate the CLC mode of operations; the newly launched PLCE project of the government appears to have been drawn upon the CLC model.

Quarry 5

How do the CLCs help in prevention of neo-literates from their relapsing into illiteracy?

Response

PTGs undergo literacy courses in stages from level E to level A; STGs read newspapers, books and booklets and retain literacy skills through regular practice.

Quarry 6

To what extent CLC activities are effective in making people aware of the choices that they have regarding, health, environment, social structures, economic situation etc? [Explain with reference to each of the different aspects]

Response

CLCs are effective in this regard because they provide training (to CWs and also the members) on vocational skills and environment conservation and conduct issue-based discussions to make the members aware; the campaign is effective because members use the awareness for improvement of the standard of living.

Quarry 7

How do you think the CLC activities contribute to poverty alleviation? What is the experience with CLC members and their community?

Response

Because CLC members gained in literacy, they became more aware about healthcare, spend less in treatment of diseases; with training in livelihood skills they earn more; thus poverty alleviation goals are promoted by spending less and earning more.

Quarry 8

How effective the CLCs are in their role as institutions that provide advice, help or the solutions of problems in personal or community life of the local people? How many cases of providing such services are in the records of CLC activities? What innovative ways the CLCs use in providing these services? How are the CLCs different from other organizations/agencies in this regard?

Response

CLCs motivate members in resisting early marriage, polygamy, dowry; CLCs are successful in motivating them in the movement through organized campaign at a low cost.

Quarry 9

Do CLCs have any special system(s) through which they provide information to the communities so that they are not missed out on government services? How do such systems operate?

Response

All government agencies and non-government organizations are provided with the list of CLCs operating in the area and the addresses of CLCs are also given to them; organization of delivery specific services take place through joint efforts to reach community members.

Quarry 10

How do the CLCs address the needs of (a) lifelong learning, (b) community development, (c) poverty alleviation, and (d) improvement in quality of life? What are the roles of local, district/regional and central level in this effort? How is the CLC approach different from other agencies in this regard? Answer separately for (a), (b), (c), (d).

Response

- a. Use of reading materials according to grades, newspapers, journals; regular follow-up.
- b. Tree plantation, sanitary latrines, tube-wells, cultural programs, training on environment, healthcare, leadership development, men-women relationship, community development process.
- c. Training on life skills, income generation activities.

- d. Safe drinking water, sanitary latrines, motivation to send children to schools, maintenance of cleanliness in the house and in the community, resistance to socially undesirable practices, eradication of illiteracy, poverty alleviation, community development, advocacy, other trainings on quality of life.

Quarry 11

Whether CLCs could empower the poor and the disadvantaged women? How?

Response

Women are given priority in CLC programs; empowerment takes place through literacy, life skill training, awareness development, information dissemination, services from other agencies through linkages.

Quarry 12

How do you judge the impact of operation of CLCs as (a) community libraries, (b) centers of information counseling, (c) resource services? Are the impacts visible? Explain with evidence and separately for (a), (b), (c).

Response

- a. Libraries allow CLC members to borrow books, CWs review what the CLC members read at the library and assess the impact.
- b. CLCs provide useful information to members to help them in their personal, family and community life; CWs judge the impact by evaluating whether the information come to their use.
- c. Use of various resources at CLC, including the resource persons.

Quarry 13

What is the management hierarchy (from central to local level)? Are there any variations in the local management pattern of CLCs? If yes, what are the reasons? If all CLCs have similar management structure, how does it accommodate local peculiarities? How local initiatives in management are accommodated?

Response

CLC management committee has 11 members; ratio of men and women in the committee varies.

Quarry 14

Whether all CLCs have developed adequate networking with government offices, NGOs, and other local/regional organizations? What is the experience of working in cooperation with them? Whether these 'other agencies' approach CLCs for working together or, whether CLCs approach them for support? Use examples.

Response

All CLCs have linkages with government agencies and NGOs; DYD provides training in poultry, livestock rearing; BRAC, ASA provides micro-credit to trained CLC members.

Quarry 15

How do the CLCs promote increased access of their members to services (loan fund, education, seed, agricultural extension, advocacy, health and sanitation services and the like) of government agencies, NGOs and other organizations?

Response

CLCs create scope for CLC members to have access to micro-credit, literacy training, seed, agricultural extension services, advocacy, healthcare and sanitation services of other agencies.

Quarry 16

Do CLCs reach out to all in the community? How? Whether CLCs are effective in responding to local needs and aspirations? What is the mechanism to ensure that?

Response

CLCs reach out to all in the community; members benefit from information services, cultural functions, newspapers, inoculation program, and sanitation services; at first the problems are identified, then priorities are determined and the measures taken to solve the problems.

Quarry 17

Whether CLCs have formed community action groups? How many, and in what organizational forms? What do they do and what are the benefits of their activities? Who ultimately enjoys the benefits and how?

Response

CLCs formed CAGs; each CLC operation area is divided into 4 blocks, and a CAG is formed with 5 promising members from each block; CAGs orient people in environment for social development, assist them in solving various problems such as admission of children in schools, taking a sick person to nearby hospital/clinic.

Quarry 18

How is the operation of CLC revolving fund (micro-credit) organized? How do the revolving fund program of CLC differ from that of other NGOs? Do all CLCs have the program? What is the total number of beneficiaries (by CLCs/districts, or loan support activities)? Comment on the effectiveness and impact of the programs. What are the problems of CLCs in operating the loan funds? What are the problems of beneficiaries in the use of loans? Do you have some more information to share about the revolving loan program?

Response

Some CLCs provide credit at their own initiative and management; the service charge is low, repayment schedule is easy as it is with consideration of local conditions; credit support is inadequate as compared to the demand, members sometimes do not use credit according to loan proposals and instead, they give money to husbands or others.

Quarry 19

Whether the targets of training CLC members are achieved? What do the CLC members do with their training? Who monitors this and how? What are the field level evidences about the success/failures of the training activities and the use of training by CLC members?

Response

CLC members use the skills they attain through training in income generating activities. DAM monitors through its MIS unit using a set of indicators developed in the light of CLC objectives.

Quarry 20

What is the role and contribution of CLCs in gender development? [Explain with field level data].

Response

Women CLC members developed the capacity to contribute in decision-making; women are given preference in training on various skills and continuing education.

Quarry 21

How rich are the CLC programs of organizing vocational training and support to income generation activities? Whether all CLCs have them in place? What are the problems? How do CLCs overcome them? [Explain with evidence].

Response

About 40% of the CLCs have vocational training facilities; CLCs have close linkage with micro-credit organizations; there are no problems.

Quarry 22

How to establish that CLC activities help their members in (a) attaining financial solvency, (b) increasing skills in reading, writing, and numeracy of the children and adolescents, (c) growth in their awareness about health, environment, relationship among the people in the community, social and economic rights, and opportunities for enhancing incomes, (d) capacity building of women in decision making, (e) literacy and skill development of the adults, and (f) improvement of lifestyle. Use field level statistics and also give overall data on achievement of learners in literacy and of members in improvement of quality of life.

Response

CLC activities help their members through (i) life skills and leadership development training, (ii) micro-credit, (iii) literacy training and supply of learning materials, (iv) organization of issue-based discussion and (v) ensuring participation of women members in economic and educational activities.

Quarry 23

Whether CLC activities influence ANFE programs of other government agencies/NGOs at local, regional/district and central level? How?

Response

CLCs share their experience through meetings, seminars, workshops.

Quarry 24

Do you think that the local CLCs get adequate support from district/regional level DAM offices? In what activities and how? (give special reference to their support in establishing linkage with other organizations and agencies, training, monitoring, reporting and other special aspects, if any). Whether the DAM staff at different levels attained enhanced capabilities in planning, monitoring and supervision of CLC activities? Give examples.

Response

Adequate support received in areas of training, monitoring and reporting.

Quarry 25

What support the CLCs receive from the DAM central level? Elaborate. Whether the experience (in terms of DAM head office – local CLC relations) leads to any useful observations, especially for policy formulation, planning and designing of implementation modalities? Whether there had been any changes over time in these aspects? Give examples.

Response

From the DAM central level CLCs receive material support, training support and technical support.

Quarry 26

How do you monitor management and other administrative records at the central level? What is the data flow chain from head office to local CLCs and in the reverse direction?

Response

Reports are collected from the employees of different levels in prescribed formats; the data are analyzed and maintained in the DAM headquarters; the field offices are given the feedback for taking necessary measures for improvement.

Chapter V Conclusion

The main objective of the present study was to assess the impact of the CLC project on the life of the beneficiaries. The evaluation, however, concentrated more on the effects of the project since only a short time had elapsed after the scheduled period of implementation of the APPEAL supported CLC project and theoretically, it is too early to have any assessable impact. An impact study of projects of the CLC type can be designed in a framework that looks into impact as the consequences of the project activities in the long-run in terms of their contribution to poverty alleviation, enhancement of the standard of living, development of rural communities, eradication of illiteracy, decline in population growth rates and unemployment (especially through growth in number of economically active population because of increased access to productive resources and services, including credit), more equitable distribution of income, empowerment of the poor and especially, the disadvantaged women, and the like.

An acceptable framework of the impact evaluation in the given case is to look at CLCs as functional units that use inputs (e.g., money, material, expertise) and deliver outputs (e.g., physical infrastructure of CLCs, CLC members with increased literacy and better livelihood skills, quality training on activities that are locally useful, micro-credit) that create effects (such as increase in the level of literacy of the beneficiaries and their skills in livelihood trades, increase in their ability to participate in community development activities and in their consciousness about the society and environment, enhancement of their income, increase in adopting family planning practices, elevation of the status of CLC members in their families and communities). The outputs and effects may in general be termed as the program benefits and for having sustainable impact, CLCs need to ensure a benefit continuum forming a 'tunnel', at one end of which there is the target population and at the other, a transformed society. The present study, however, follows a conventional approach in which the terms effect and impact have been taken as synonymous.

Impact of CLCs at the beneficiary/community level

Although executives at the DAM headquarters claim that CLCs perform multidimensional activities addressed to the needs and for the benefits of CLC members and the communities they live in, the official DAM documents on activity plans for CLCs show that most planned activities and programs relate to development of the CLC structure, including its physical capacities and to capacity development for management and operations of CLCs. Also, according to the DAM official records, CLCs have performed apparently well in terms of the stated activity plans for the three years of the project.

CLCs are successful in a sense that the people in the CLC operation areas accept the CLC as a special type of institution for non-formal education and life skills training. CLCs are also generally recognized by the neo-literate CLC members, as well as by the interested members of the local public as useful meeting places, where they can read newspapers, discuss matters relating to various issues of family and community life, develop their awareness about human rights, family planning, healthcare and environment, get some training on skills required for income generating activities and receive inoculation and agriculture extension services.

The impact of CLCs at the beneficiary and community level, however, is not as extensive as might often be portrayed by DAM officials, who in fact, believe that there are many constraints and limitations in CLC operations and the performance could be improved much for having a broader and deeper impact. The sample survey findings of a recent report, following which the

present study was undertaken revealed that the CLC continuing education program failed by 100% in Jhenidah and by 50% in Narsinghdi, the adult education program failed by 50% in Jhenidah and the cultural program and program on income generation activities failed in Narsinghdi by 17%. The reasons for failure, as stated in the report were women members leaving the CLCs due to change of their addresses after marriage, elderly people prohibiting women in attending CLCs under religious considerations, problems of female members in working together with their male counterparts, misuse of money, and difficulty in making time because of household and other workload. The report further noted that the impact of CLC programs on gender equity, poverty alleviation and environment conservation had been marginal and CLCs were not successful in motivating local people in taking their children to schools.

The report indicated that the CLCs could enhance the status of the members in their families and communities and also (a) increased community awareness on the importance of education, the scope for literacy practice and for acquiring life skills, awareness about health and sanitation, environment and the rights of the women and their participation in community activities; (b) contributed to capacity building of the women in decision making; (c) operated as forums where people learn by doing; and (d) developed the capacity of CLC members to enjoy a better life. These findings of the report on impact, however, have been presented as some general observations without much empirical evidence. Further, they contradict to many of the statements made in other sections of the report, especially where it discusses weaknesses and limitations of the CLC activities.

Two major limitations of the CLCs are shortage of reading/learning materials and of materials and equipment for games, sports and entertainment in them and their poor physical set up. Not all CLCs provide training in all types of life skill training that are locally useful and in many cases CLCs suffer from poor management, supervision and monitoring. CLC community workers are loaded with many responsibilities and they often find it difficult to allocate time and energy to effectively discharge all of them. CLCs do not have adequate fund for providing the micro-credit support to members who require it for income generating activities.

The achievements of CLCs are limited largely because of the poor participation of members in CLC activities. The number of CLC members who are regular in taking part in CLC activities and programs is approximately 20–25% and notwithstanding the limitations, CLC members who are regular in taking part in CLC activities and programs are benefited from them in many ways.

Thanks to regular participation in the CLC literacy and NFE program about one-third of them could attain a literacy level of grade A (grade V) in three years, which in a regular primary school would take five to seven years. About one-third of the members had attained a literacy level of grade B (IV). With the literacy level they attained the members are now capable of reading, writing and counting, managing household accounts and even the accounts of the small businesses they undertake. Further, with literacy and increased awareness about the society and the environment, they take better care of the family and children, enjoy a better status in the family and the community and are eligible for taking more meaningful role in the decision-making process at both levels.

CLC activities do have relevance to the personal, family and social life of the members. Their participation in training on income generating skills and quality of life has a contribution to an increase in their monthly income, as well as in their position in the family and the community. About 60% of the regular CLC members now have their monthly income increased by an amount up to Tk 1000 as compared to their monthly income before they joined CLCs. The monthly income of 30% of them increased by an amount between Tk 1001 and 1500 and of 10% of them

between Tk 1501 and 2000. The most useful among the areas of livelihood training to CLC members are growing vegetables, poultry, nursery, sewing and livestock rearing.

CLC members are of the opinion that this innovative DAM institution operates well as a center for development of community awareness. The regular CLC members find it useful to attend CLC training on quality of life (social awareness, men-women relationship, environment conservation and leadership development) and the various issue-based discussions. Also the local communities are benefited from CLC activities such as campaign on awareness about consequences of early marriage and dowry, training on healthcare and sanitation, inoculation and agricultural extension services, and cultural programs. CLC members believe that CLC activities enhance community consciousness and social integrity and develop confidence of the CLC members, as well as of the members of the community in their capacity to solve many problems through discussion and mutual cooperation. The CLCs therefore, are not just meeting places. To members who are regular in participating in CLC activities, CLCs are agents of community development.

That a large majority of the CLC members are not regular in taking part in CLC activities only demonstrate that the CLCs are not very successful in becoming institutions for which the general members have a feeling of ownership. Neither the members of the local communities have the ownership feeling, since both CLC members and the non-member local people are reluctant in contribution to funding CLC activities. In many places CLC members, as well as the members of the local public have a feeling that paying to CLC is not worth the services they offer, CLCs do not provide adequate credit support for IGA and entrepreneurship, and the absence of early childhood care and education program is a problem. Flow of information materials in CLCs is irregular and also, in many places the members of the CLC management committees are not regular in attending monthly meetings.

CLCs have little effect in terms of development of management capacity of the local people. In fact, CLC activities do not have this aspect in focus. CLC members consider that the leadership development training has some usefulness to them and the issue-based discussions also contribute indirectly to development of their management capability, but ultimately, the CLC members live individually, do not undertake initiatives with mass involvement, and do not run big or even medium enterprises. This virtually restricts CLC members in their practice of discharging management responsibility. Only on rare occasions, CLC members demonstrate some ability in settling disputes or organizing community participation in cultural programs or tree plantation. So far, CLC members could not come up as an organized force that could take initiative in social movements (for example, against drug addiction, child and women trafficking, terrorism or for establishment of human rights), collectively facing natural calamities or organizing rehabilitation programs. At personal level, however, CLC women members could develop some capacity in managing household affairs and decision-making and change attitude towards life.

Impact at the district level

The CLC project under review is a small one and operates within a small area. Even with its present scale it could have impact at district or regional level if it achieved outstanding success and participated by all target beneficiaries. The project could establish some linkages with local/district level government agencies, local branches of some regional/national NGOs and a few local NGOs. But the linkages are not institutionalized and none of the partners have any policy or plan of action in the cooperation. In view of some recent developments in the attitude of government towards GO-NGO or public-private partnership and thanks to personal initiatives of some CLC community workers or supervisors, CLCs can now arrange some training programs

with the help of government agencies (such as DYD, DLS, DAE, DOF), operate as venues for delivery of agriculture extension, inoculation or family planning services. The impact of these services is left 'virtually to chances, adhocism and voluntarism'.

As of today, there is no formal coordination/interaction at the district level among government offices of education, agriculture, health etc as regards CLC programs and activities. CLCs therefore, practically do not get any direct or indirect support, except occasionally, from the district level organizations in capacity building of personnel. No district level organization provides any assistance/cooperation to CLCs in materials development or monitoring/evaluation of CLC programs.

Impact at the national level

Until now, the basic national principles on GO-NGO or public-private partnership and the partnership among the NGOs are in most part only on paper and therefore, like all other NGOs, DAM works practically alone at the center in mobilizing resources and managing the programs. DAM, however, has interaction with government agencies and many NGOs and it takes part in seminars, symposiums, workshops and conferences. This might have given some scope for CLCs to have an impact at the national level. DAM officials claim that the objectives, strategies and interventions of the newly launched donor funded post-literacy and continuing education (PLCE) project implemented by DNFE were heavily drawn upon the APPEAL supported DAM CLC model. The claim seems to be partially valid since PLCE is a result of exercise on review and evaluation of the DNFE's various ANFE projects, as well as of literacy and continuing education projects implemented by different NGOs, including the Dhaka Ahsania Mission, BRAC, UCEP, CMES and FIVDB.

The management, supervision and monitoring and evaluation practices of CLCs are hardly replicated in any form in similar programs of government agencies and NGOs. The linkage efforts at personal initiatives of CLC community workers or supervisors could penetrate to some extent to the practice of national level extension service agencies and government departments and directorates to develop a cooperation with DAM. But the cooperation could hardly contribute to capacity development of DAM staff in policy formulation, planning or implementation of literacy or training programs. Neither do the cooperating agencies have influence on policy formulation at the central/national level.

Sustainability

Expectations about the sustainability of CLCs in about 3 years after their formation with DAM support proved to be a failure. Some estimates suggest that raising funds from the local sources by an amount that ensures a flow of approximately Tk 1,000 a month would help CLCs to sustain without DAM grant support. But this seems to be too optimistic, largely because of lack of motivation and widespread poverty. According to some observations, CLCs are yet to reach a sustainable status. Others even found that a reduction in DAM's funding to CLCs support by 30% or more would lead to closure of CLCs. Depending on generous contributions often do not work because members do not feel it worth paying to CLCs against the services they offer. People of the local community including the members of the CLC management committees are reluctant in contributing funds for CLC operations. CLCs are yet to be developed in a way so that they may be seen and treated by the local community as institutions the upkeep of which it feels responsible for. It is necessary to re-define the objectives of the CLC in response to the demand for the livelihood skill training and financing for starting self-employment.

Implications for the future

The present study does not have much scope of making any comprehensive conclusion or recommendations on the future directions of CLCs because it investigated mainly the output side of the project and made only general review of the inputs side including the institutional arrangement, the management framework and tools, cost and financing of the project, and forms and methods of monitoring, evaluation and the feedback system for improving the service delivery mechanism.

Under the circumstances, one way of looking for the steps for making CLCs more effective is to take care of the project's limitations presented more or less extensively in Chapter II of the present report (section II.IV, *Limitations of CLCs*), Chapter III (section III.II, *CLC Operations and Management*) and Chapter IV (section IV.I, *The Impact and Limitations of CLCs*).

For solving the problems and limitations stated in these sections and for improvement in CLC performance for a better impact, the present report suggests no new measures. Instead it repeats, albeit in a reorganized form, the suggestions and recommendations made in the previous CLC Impact Evaluation Report, which are:

1. Establish CLCs at locations more convenient for members of the local community to attend and equip them with necessary facilities and materials;
2. Prepare baseline data for each CLC catchment area;
3. Change CLC membership rule to include more than one member from one family;
4. Link literacy and community development activities with CLC interventions to address socio-economic needs of the target population;
5. Address the learning needs of the villagers in flexible modes to suit their own timing and arrange interventions to match their occupational needs, suitable for adoption and adaptation to changes, creating scope for switching over to new profession;
6. Arrange wider social mobilization through innovative forms and methods;
7. Integrate learning material and learning with recreational programs;
8. Monitor through a more systematic and up to date data about the field/target people/local community;
9. Link IGP activities with market;
10. Formalize linkage with government agencies and other NGOs operating in the locality;
11. Devote more time to literacy activities and accordingly, design programs as core and non-core activities;
12. Help the community in learning how to find the solutions to problems instead of giving the solutions to them;
13. Improve management skills of the community workers;
14. Incorporate community worker as secretary of CLC management committee; and
15. Create a multipurpose professional/technical backstopping/support system for CLCs at the community level.

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