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***INFLUENCE OF LOCAL INSTITUTIONS ON ACCESS
TO RESOURCES IN RURAL BANGLADESH****

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ABSTRACT

Kinship relationship dominates the formation of different groups at the village level and benefits of government institutions go largely to the group leader and his relatives. Further, political support for the local leaders largely determines the distribution of government supplied credit, inputs, etc., in favour of certain groups of people thus exacerbating income distribution problem in the rural community.

I. INTRODUCTION

The village life in Bangladesh is dominated by various factional or kinship leaders. A leading family which will almost certainly be a landed one, gathers around itself followers of a lower socio-economic status. The followers come to the leader for advice, for financial help, etc., and in return the leader gets a group of loyal supporters who will side him in village rivalries, vote for him if he ever contests for election, work on his fields or around the house when an unforeseen need arises and at times fight for him (Abdullah *et al.* 1976). Factional characteristics are not always the normal pattern in village communities. Sometimes kin leaders dominate different socio-economic aspects of the village life. A kinship lineage is composed of the villagers normally within a physical proximity of the group in a single village or other contiguous area (Gotsch 1972). Although the traditional ties of kinship are disintegrating and influence of the factional groupings are weakening due to spread of education, rural and urban migration, employment opportunities in the non-farm sector and different political ideologies, the institution of kinship or factional groupings still influence the socio-economic activities of the villagers.

Both factional and kinship groups allow for leader/follower and patron/client relationships between members within each group. The relative position of members within

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a group is dominated by, among other things, land ownership, social status (attributable to education, family lineage and religion), income and access to regional and central political and administrative power (Alamgir 1978). It seems that these kinship or factional leaders are more exposed to the mass-media and have more contacts with different government institutions. They are the literate ones who can mediate between the villagers and the outside world. The control of local institutions is likely to pass directly or indirectly into the hands of these local leaders or in some cases, to a few influential trading groups (specially who are involved in distribution of different agricultural inputs). These few influential persons who are popularly known as village elites, control the whole community and benefits from institutional sources are channelised through them to different factional/kinship groups. Government officials such as extension workers, officers of the credit agencies, suppliers of inputs would tend to favour them (Islam 1978). The local officials must work through these village elites in order to be effective.

There are several kinship or factional groups in a village and there exists an internal competition among these groups. Therefore, if any input is supplied by the institutional source to any of the village elites for distribution, it is first distributed within the elite's own kinship or factional group. Besides kinship or factional groupings, another type of distribution channel has been developed by the local political representatives. Although these local representatives may also come from among the kinship or factional leaders, they are more powerful than the local informal leaders (kinship/fractional leaders). Contacts with administrative and police officials, control over the agencies of distribution of different inputs and credit, distribution of relief materials from the Government, etc., established them in a stronger position than kinship or factional leaders. In this case also benefits from institutional sources are distributed mostly among the supporters of the political leaders.

The aim of this paper is to show empirically with data from a village in Jamalpur district how kinship and local political leadership are causing distributional problems in the rural communities.

II. DATA SOURCE

Data was collected during the year 1979-80 from the village Bamna under Islampur thana of Jamalpur district. The village is located about 30 miles away from the district town and about 7 miles away from the thana head quarter.

Presence of various irrigation technologies and use of HYV seed was considered for selecting the area. Out of four Paras in the village, 86 farmers from two adjacent Paras were taken as sample. Most of the Deep Tubewell (DTW) users and quite a large number of Hand Tubewell (HTW) users of the village were located in those Paras. Fifty

eight landless households residing in the two paras were not included in the sample. The distribution of the sample farmers according to farm size groups is given in Table 1.

TABLE 1 DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLDS ACCORDING TO CULTIVABLE HOLDING

Category of farmers	Landholding (acres)	No. of Households	Total Cultivable land (acres)	% of total cultivable land
Poor	Upto 2.00	45	52.68	25
Middle	2.01 to 4.0	25	72.12	34
Rich	4.01 and above	16	85.30	41
Total		86	210.10	100

There were one DTW and two IRDP HTW societies in the study area. Out of 86 sample farm families, 27 were DTW users,¹ 43 were HTW users and 16 did not use irrigation. Eleven HTW users did it privately while 32 used it under IRDP HTW societies. The farmers who got the opportunity to irrigate HYV Boro by DTW did not use HTW for irrigation.

III. KINSHIP RELATIONSHIPS IN THE LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS/ COOPERATIVES AND DISTRIBUTION OF BENEFITS FROM GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

The village elites who control the local level organizations or cooperatives, have good links with the thana level development organizations. The officers at the thana level are also dependent on them to help implement Government policies.² So, these leaders act as a medium or link of the top-down process of Government credit service, input supplies and other institutional services.

The local level leaders organize the villagers and form cooperatives or groups. Kinship relationship dominates the formation of these groups. Not only that, these groups are often formed on the basis of false membership, showing separate families for wife, children and other dependents. Thus the benefits from Government institutions go largely to the group leader and his relatives. Benefits may also go to a few small

farmers who have kinship relation with the leader of the group. In a small locality (say, a *Para*), the relations of the same family lineage usually have close similarity in economic and social status. So, it is found that in such a locality, when a group or cooperative is formed by the rich or middle farmers, the kinship relations who are included as members usually belong to the same status. If the size of the group is small, majority of the poor farmers of that locality is excluded from this type of group organization. When kin/factional leaders also have political power, group organizations tend to be more distorted and benefits tend to be more unequally distributed.

To examine how this kinship relationship is causing distributional problems, we have shown inter-relationships between different members of two IRDP HTW societies in the selected village (Fig. 1 and 2). Further, the kinship relationship within the managing committee of the DTW group in the study area has also been investigated (Fig. 3) in this connection.

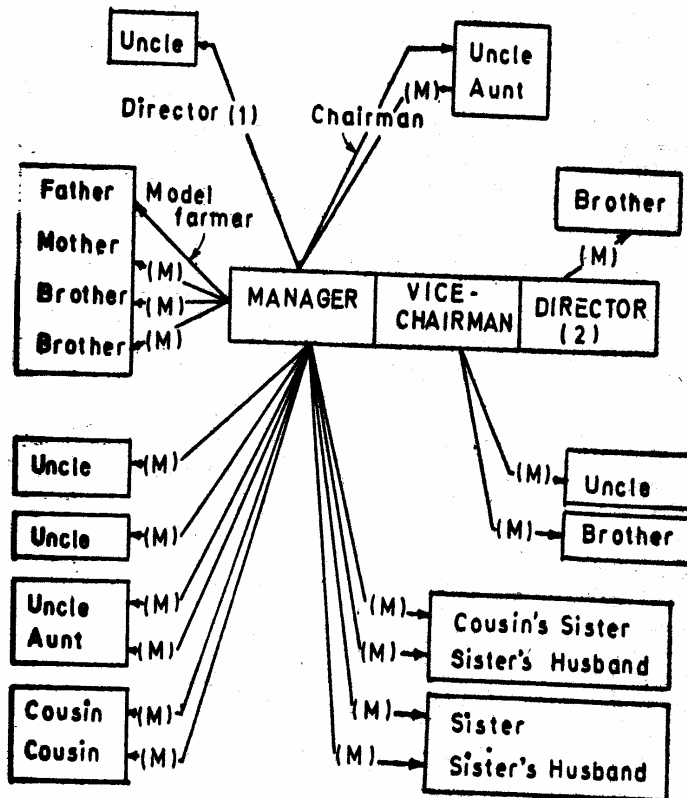
(i) IRDP HTW Societies

To obtain institutional services from IRDP, HTW societies were formed. The benefit from IRDP HTW Society came mostly either in the form of HTW on credit or only in the form of credit of Taka 350.00 to each member. HTW credit was repayable in 3 instalments. The price per HTW was fixed at Taka 700.00 while the market price was Taka 1000.00.

The manager is the key person in a HTW society who forms the cooperative, maintains most of the official linkages and distributes credit or HTW supplied by the IRDP among the members of his society. The managers of the two IRDP societies in the area came from rich and upper middle farmers' group who were relatively well educated in the village context. The manager of the HTW society 1, was a son of a rich farmer (4.67 acres of land). He had college education and his father was a village doctor and socially well placed. The manager of another HTW society was a son of an upper middle farmer (3.71 acres of land). He also had college education with some training in livestock disease treatment and was socially well placed. The managing committee of each HTW society consisted of a Manager, Chairman, Vice Chairman, Model Farmer³ and two directors. The average cultivable land holding of the members of the managing committee of HTW society 1 was 3.56 acres ranging between 2.15 to 4.67 acres. For HTW society 2, the average was 3.98 acres with a range of 2.66 to 7.17 acres.

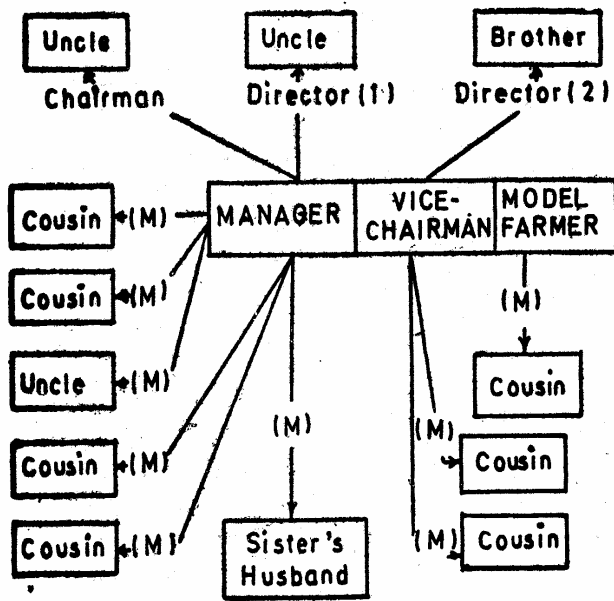
The HTW society 1 consisted of 23 members including members of the managing committee. It can be observed from figure 1 that the benefit from the society was derived by only 3 kinship groups related to the Manager, Vice Chairman and Director. The Manager also had relationship with the Chairman, Model Farmer and one Director of the mana-

Figure 1. Inter-relationships among the Members of IRDP HTW Society (1).



= Separate Family
 (Manager belonged to Model farmer's family)
 M = Manager of the society

Figure 2. Inter-relationships among the Members of (RDP HTW Society (2)).



□ = Separate family
 (M) = Member of the Society

ging committee. Thus out of 6 members of the managing committee, 4 were interrelated by kinship to the manager. Further, it can be observed from Figure 1 that the benefit was derived by only 14 families in the name of 23 families⁴. Most of the benefit was derived by the manager and his family as the membership included them as 5 families, though they belonged in fact to a single family. Further it can be observed husband, wife, sons and daughter represented separate families. In the HTW society 2, it was found that out of 21 members, 15 were related to 3 kinship groups.

The members of the HTW society 1 received 19 HTWs while the members of the society 2 received 18 HTWs. Other members of both the societies were given credit in cash. In the HTW society 1, it was found that as a result of false membership more than one HTW was supplied to 4 families. The manager's family received 3 HTWs while each of the other 3 families received 2 HTWs. Since these families were relatively rich, they did not use all these HTWs by themselves. Out of 9 HTWs received by these 4 families, only 4 were used by themselves while 2 were sold in the open market at a higher price and 3 were rented out to others for the boro season. The rent of a HTW for the boro season was Taka 300.00 to Taka 400.00 in cash or 3-4 maunds of paddy in kind. Above evidence supports the proposition that kinship relationship dominates the formation of groups or societies at the local level which serve the interest of a few better off people depriving the poor farmers who are in the greatest need.

(ii) DTW Managing Committee

The DTW managing committee consisted of manager, chairman, vice chairman and four members. In a DTW society, the manager is a key person who is responsible for operation and maintenance of DTW, distribution of water to the farmers' plots, collecting water charges from the farmers, keeping records of income and expenditure of the society, paying rental charge to the BADC, etc. Manager and driver-cum-fieldmen are in direct contact with the farmers as the water distribution system depends on them. Other members of the managing committee are not so actively related with the DTW society's activities.

Strong kinship relationships were also observed in the managing committee of the DTW society. Except vice chairman and one member, rest of the five members of the managing committee came from a single kinship group as also did driver-cum-fieldmen (figure 3). Thus a single kinship group took most of the decisions about water distribution for the whole group. The members of this kinship group belonged to rich and upper middle group of farmers⁵ having relatively more education with higher status in the society and very powerful in the community (Table 2).

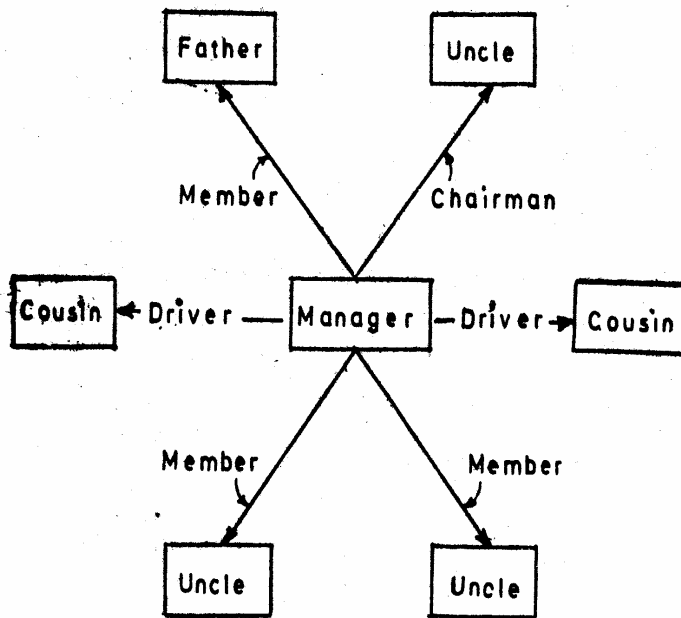
Another reason for control over DTW was due to installation of DTW on the plot of a member of the managing committee who was father of the manger. Further, since

TABLE 2 AGRICULTURAL LANDHOLDING, EDUCATION AND OCCUPATION OF THE MEMBERS OF DTW MANAGING COMMITTEE

Particulars	Manager	Chairman	Vice-Chairman	Members			
				1	2	3	4
Cultivable land (acres)	*	3.77	8.60	7.96*	5.30	5.05	7.31
Education	S.S.C.	H.S.C.	S.S.C.	Class VIII	Class VIII	H.S.C.	S.S.C.
Occupation	Agriculture + Business	Village Doctor + Agriculture	Agriculture + School teacher	Agriculture + business	Agriculture + business	Village Doctor + Agriculture	School teacher + Agriculture

*Manager is a son of Member 1 of the managing committee.

Figure 3. Inter-relationships among the Members of DTW Managing Committee.



most of the members of the managing committee came from a single kinship relation, a part of their land which was inherited among themselves from their common ancestor, was located in a particular area of the project (surrounding the plot where the DTW was installed). The locational advantage of their plots in a particular area of the project gave them opportunity to discriminate in water distribution system. Moreover, to ensure water distribution biased to their group and their supporters, the drivers were selected from their own kinship group. In the previous year, there was another fieldman from another kinship group who did not serve their interest fully, so they dismissed him and appointed two others from their own group. The poor farmers who did not have any representative on the managing committee for decision regarding water distribution system, were particularly deprived of their proper share of water. The poor farmers reported that to get

water, each time they had to make several requests to the managing committee, pay several visits to the field and often wait for several hours and sometimes a day for irrigation water to their plots. They had to remain present in the field each time otherwise they were almost certain to get less water for their plots.

IV LOCAL LEADERS AND DISTRIBUTION OF CREDIT AND INPUTS

The influence of local leaders in distributing institutional credit and modern inputs has been examined in relation to distribution of credit from Banks and HYV wheat seed from agricultural office. In this particular case, political power was more prominent because of the official mechanism of credit distribution. But kinship also play a major role in the ultimate distribution of credit.

(i) Credit from Banks

Like leaders of kinship groups, the local political leaders (member or chairman of the Union Council) also act as intermediaries between credit institutions (Banks) and the farmers. There were two steps in sanctioning short-term loans for different crops from Banks (Janata Bank and Krishi Bank). First, a priority list of the farmers was prepared by the Union Agricultural Assistant for the whole union. Then the farmers included in that priority list had to collect a certificate from the member or chairman of the Union Council. For sanctioning loan against HYV Boro, a priority list was prepared which included the farmers who devoted at least 1.00 acre for producing the crop. The average acreage of HYV Boro crop per family was found to be 2.31 acres in the priority list. It may be mentioned here that a poor farmer (average farm size, 1.17 acres) with one HTW irrigated about 0.50 acre of land (for HYV Boro). This was half of the minimum acreage listed in the priority list. It appeared from both the minimum and average acreages of irrigated land in the priority list that the poor farmers had very little scope for obtaining credit from the Banks.

Again to get a certificate from the member or chairman of the Union Council, required good relationship with them. Political support and kinship were found to be the major criteria for obtaining a certificate from them. It was found that 8 families received credit from Janata Bank in the name of 14 member families. The member himself represented 4 families, the chairman of the same political party (also on the managing committee of the DTW) represented 3 families and another rich farmer represented 2 families. Thus, by using false names, in this case also, the benefit was derived by a few influential families. Needless to say, all were supporters of the political party of the member through whom the loan was distributed. An extreme example of political support is illustrated by the fact that the highest amount of loan (Taka 1452.00) was received by the Chairman of the political party.

The credit officers are more interested in the amount of loan distributed than in equity between beneficiaries. Further, as there is no pressure for repayment of loan, the beneficiaries do not feel the necessity of repayment and ultimately think of it as a government grant or gift. It was found that none of the beneficiaries repaid loans obtained from institutional sources. Further, it was found that the aim of the HTW societies was to obtain HTW or credit from IRDP. Once the credit has been obtained, the purpose of the group or the society is over. Thus a few groups of people are gaining many legal and illegal advantages by forming these types of societies.

(ii) **Distribution of HYV Wheat Seed by Agricultural Office**

The farmers had to collect HYV wheat seed from Islampur thana agricultural office, 7 miles away from the village. The Union Agricultural Assistant identified the farmers and seed was distributed accordingly. The Union Agricultural Assistant favoured the influential rich and middle farmers and gave them more seed than they really needed. The excess seed was sold in the market at about double the government subsidized rate. On the other extreme, some poor farmers reported that they visited the thana office several times, but did not get seed. Others reported that they were reluctant to go to the thana office because they knew that they would not get it. It was found that excess seed was distributed to the members of the managing committee of DTW and the members of the Union Council. They partly distributed it to their own kinship relations and partly sold in market at higher price after meeting their own requirements. Thus, this type of distribution system of input supplies favours some people, who do not really need subsidized seed or irrigation water and who do not need credit. At the same time, it deprives the vast majority of small farmers who really need help, thus increasing income disparity in the rural community.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The poor illiterate farmers have no influence within the community. They are neither represented nor have any kinship ties to help them to get the services from government institutions. Due to lack of education and knowledge about circumstances outside their community, they do not know how to organize a cooperative, how to manage it, etc. For example, they wanted to change the DTW manager due to his corruption and mismanagement. But in the event they failed to do it because, the poor farmers did not have any representative to perform all the managerial work. Further, the power of the managing committee was so strong that other members also could do nothing. As a result, the same manager and managing committee remained in power. Therefore, it is not very easy to change the power structure or for poor farmers to get access to such organizations. Under this type of social and institutional set up, distribution of benefits from the government

institutional sources is unequal. The inability of the poor farmers to obtain the required services affects productivity as well as perpetuate inequality. To reduce social tension and to ensure better income distribution, special attention should be given to the poor farmers in distributing institutional inputs and services.

Notes :

1. Total number of DTW users was 45. The number of users included in the sample was 27.
2. As Myrdal (1968) puts it, ".....the officials administering development programmes require the cooperation of local elite (if they are to get successful results)." No wonder, then, that the evaluation studies invariably conclude that these programmes have helped mainly those in the rural population who are already relatively well off."
3. Model farmers are selected by the IRDP for training on cultivation of improved practices. The model farmer is supposed to disseminate his knowledge to other farmers.
4. The manager was a son of the model farmer and belonged to the same family. Thus, although it appears from figure 1 that there are 15 families, actually the number of families is 14.
5. One of them was a chairman of a political party which formed the national government.

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