

001 Village Mirjapur: A Socio-Economic Survey
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a) Researchers' Identity

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b) Objective

1. The objective of this study was to find out the socio-economic condition of the study area.

c) Executive summary

The total population of the village Mirjapur is 1,282 and as the village is 1.0 square mile, the density of population is also the same. The female population of the village is a bit higher than the male population. Muslim constitutes 90.15% of the total population. Total number of households in the village is 227. Distribution of population by age shows that the number of dependents is higher. The average family size of the village is 5.65 persons.

The total area of the village is 627.48 acres of which 456.21 acres of land are possessed by 152 farm families of the village. Therefore, landholding per family is 3.00 acres. There are three categories of farm families in the village, small, medium and big farm families. Out of the total 227 families, 75 families are landless, 48 families are small, 67 families medium and 37 families are big farm families. It has been found in the village that the larger size of the family is having bigger area of landholding and similarly, smaller sized family is having smaller area of landholdings.

There are a total of 509 houses including living houses, kitchens, cowsheds, shops and mosque in the village. There is no brick-build house in the village. The average number of houses per family is about 2.24. The maximum number of houses is of tin and roof with mud and bamboo walls. There are 13 families who have no houses of their own in the village.

The village Mirjapur has only one Primary School. Those who are eager to study in the High School need to go to village Sonka which is two miles away from the village. The students studying in the College and Madrasha have to go to Sherpur town. Of the total number of students attending schools 63.69% are boys and only 36.31 are girls. Distribution of population according to literacy shows that, the percentage of literacy is 16.22%. Literacy among the male population is much higher than the female population. There are nine matriculates and one graduate in the village.

The main occupations of the villagers are fanning, day labour, business, services, etc. It has been seen that maximum number of families are directly engaged in farming, followed by day labourers. It has been also found in the village that average number of earning members increases with the size of the family. All the 227 families have total of 743 earning members with an average of 3.27 in each family in the village.

The main crops in the village are paddy, jute, potato, chili and other winter vegetables. There is not a single family growing improved varieties of paddy. The maximum number of farm families grows aus and aman crops. The cropping intensity in the village is 182.67%. The average per acre yields aus and aman paddy and jute are respectively 12%, 15% and 15%.

There is a river named K. aratoa passes by the side of the village. The surface water from the river and from the different tanks of the village is used for irrigation generally by indigenous methods i.e. by 'Honcha' or 'Donga' during the winter season to grow mainly boro crops and other winter crops. There is no single deep tube-well or shallow tube-well in the village. Only one farmer has one lowlife pump mainly used for his own purposes.

Out of the total families, 140 families use different improved agricultural practices with chemical fertilizers, insecticides, threshers, weeders and better quality of seeds. None use tractor, power tiller and power pump.

The dairy and poultry condition of the village is not satisfactory. It has been found in the village that larger size of landholdings have larger number of dairy and poultry animals.

In the village there are 16 tanks of which 14 are derelict, and 2 tanks are used for fish cultivation. The re-excavation is essential for these derelict tanks in order to rear fish.

The villagers borrow money from the different sources like, Bangladesh Krishi Bank, money lenders, friends and relatives. Borrowing is also done by

land-mortgage, khaikhalasbi etc. There is no professional money lender in the village. The rate of interest of Bangladesh Krishi Bank is Taka 6.25 per annum. The security demanded by this bank is mortgage of immovable property and personal security. In case of money lender, the interest is to be paid in kind the rate varies from one or two maunds of paddy for every one hundred taka per annum and is the highest rate of interest prevailed in the village.

There is a village market which sits twice a week. Mainly rice, paddy, jute, potato and other winter vegetables are brought and sold to the village markets or traders who sell these to the villagers. There is also a grocery shop in the village market. The Sherpur town is only 3 miles away and Bogra sadar district town is 16 miles from the village. There are two types of intermediaries involved in the village market, aratdars and beparies or small traders. Beparies purchase goods from the villagers by making house to house contract and sell to the aratdars. The wholesalers or aratdars sell their goods to the retailers and the consumers.

The mode of transportation used in the village for purchasing and selling of goods are mainly bullock cart, rickshaw, truck, head or shoulder load and boat during the rainy season. There is one C.S.D. godown in the village mainly used for storing paddy after Government procurement. There are no storage facilities for the agricultural products. The villagers usually store their products mainly paddy in "Kacha Gola". There are two rice mills and flour mills in the village market used for processing of paddy into rice and wheat into flour. There is no standard measurement and grading system in the village market. Grading is done by eye-estimation. Maunds, seers, chataks are used as standard weights, 16 chataks make a seer, 40 seers make a maund. There is no market information collecting agencies for the prices of the different agricultural commodities in the village market. Generally, the villagers sell their products according to the market rates, which are determined by the demand of the product and supply of the product at the equilibrium point.

There are both single and joint families in the village, but the number of single families is much higher than the joint ones. 84.14% of the families are single and only 15.86% are joint families in the village. 87.67% of the head of the families expressed the view that they are strict about observing purdah by the adult female members of their family and the rest are liberal about it. Of the respondents 89.23% feel wealth as the most important determining factor of social status in this village, and only 10.77% consider birth as the determining factor. Among the Muslims 'Sheikh' occupies the highest and 'Jola' occupies the lowest status according to the social stratification of the

village. 'Shaha' occupies the highest and 'Sarder' occupies the lowest status among the Hindu. While selecting bridegroom major importance is given on his economic condition, 78.46% of the respondents expressed this view. Only 21.54% emphasis the family status. It has been found that though cohesion among the various paras of the village is prevalent it is more intensive among the people living in the same para.

The village, Mirjapur is divided into nine paras. Out of these, eight paras have one samaj each and the rest one para is divided into two separate samaj. Every samaj is headed by a local leader. There is no specific title of the leaders. They are addressed according to their family title. Except these formal leaders there are also informal leaders who have much influence within the village. Religious leaders are consulted only on religious matters. Though heredity is given major importance while selecting a leader, it is ultimately linked with his economic condition. Distribution of samaj leaders by landholding shows that 60% of the leader possesses land between 7 to 9 acres. Distribution of samaj leaders by different age groups shows that there is no one below 36 years of age, which indicates that the leader should be a matured person. Settlement of disputes maintaining peace and cohesion, giving advice on various problems, organizing social and religious functions etc. are some of the functions performed by a samaj and its leader. The common people can participate in the decision making process but in most of the cases they cannot disobey the decisions of the leaders.

The people of the village Mirjapur are aware of the population problem and except one person all the heads of the families express family planning as 'good'.

Like most of the villagers of Bangladesh the village Mirjapur is also devoid of the facilities of modern means of communication and transportation. All the roads within the village are kuchha By-cycle; bullock cart and buffalo cart are the major means of transportation. The villagers communicate among themselves by sending messengers or meeting in the common places like weekly hat and mosque (on Jumma day). They gather news and informations of the outside world from the shops, hats and bazars. Only 9 families have radio sets and there is no subscriber for daily news paper in the village.

As regards the recreational facilities, the village even does not have any shops or tea stalls inside it, so the old and the middle aged group of people spends their spare time by sitting in a common place and gossiping there for hours together. Children and young people play various games. The villagers organize drama almost every year and some times organize ganerjalsha.

The drinking water is a problem in the village. All the people are not in a position to drink pure water. There are 32 hand tubewells and 27 dug wells in the village used for drinking purposes. Though there is sufficient number of tubewells, they are owned by the rich families and are out of the reach of most of the poor people of the village.

d) Conclusion

- e The Mirjapur Agricultural Co-operative society has not yet developed as a viable and suitable institution to cater the needs of the village fanners. It could neither succeed in increasing the yield per acre nor made satisfactory progress in the adoption of improved varieties and practices by the fanners. The village fanners in general are unskilled in the modern techniques of cultivation and still follow traditional methods and old-fashioned implements. By far the most important hindrance to modernizing the production process in the village is the lack of irrigation facility. To overcome the hurdle, small irrigation drainage project synchronizing with the excavation of the river Karatoa deserves priority.
- e Existing government allocation of fertilizer is found utterly inadequate to meet the requirements of the society members. Everywhere there is an insistent demand for chemical fertilizers, high quality seeds, insecticides, tube-well and credit. It is worth mentioning that initially subsidies would be required to induce a change in the production process . If the production functions in agriculture were to be raised through the introduction of new technologies, then new inputs would be required and the poor villagers are not in a position to afford them without providing from outside.
- e To a great extent provide money lending still exists in the village (which provide as the easiest and quickest source of credit). To accelerate the country's onward march towards self-sufficiency in food through green revolution, the government credit institution should be mould anew to increase the flow the supervisory credit funds into rural areas.
- e Compared to the total household of the village membership in the cooperative is far from satisfactory (less than 10%). Due to its weak management the co-operative society has not yet developed as a truly peoples movement in the village. It failed to attract the majority of the village farm families outside the society to join the organization due to weak agricultural extension, delays in the introduction of irrigation facility and last but not the least absence of motivational work. It seems

that enrolment of members in the cooperative is related to the availability of credit and inputs.

- e The Mirjapur cooperative society has no office. A few record books that are available are with the manager. It has been found on several occasions that the society is failing to uphold the basic discipline of cooperative's action. Weekly meetings are not regular, nor are the savings. Many are reluctant to attend the weekly meetings and lack intrinsic cooperative character. Most of the members are not conversant with their own by-laws. Intensive education should be provided to inform the general members about their rights and duties.
- e To weed out the existing shortcoming and defects of the society for assuming its proper role to uplift the socio-economic conditions of the villagers, periodical evaluation of its activities may be done by the IRDP officials.
- e Better off farmers have generally managed to retain control of the managing committee in the society. By monopolising the decision making power they are powerful enough to divert all improvement efforts and government subsidies to themselves.

The society has to be re-structured and managed in such a way that the small farmers have easy access to the decision making process, while opportunity is created for the landless labourers. It is to be remembered that any endeavour to develop rural Bangladesh must remain futile without devising alternative strategies to increase the productivity and income of the vast majority of the people at the bottom of the rural pyramid-small farmers and landless labourers. The earlier the start is made the better it is for the country.