

# Poverty and Human Development Linkages

by Mustafa K Mujeri

*Growth policies can be made more amenable to the poor by reinforcing them with investments in basic infrastructure and social services which facilitate their accumulation of physical and human capital. Within the approach, the focus needs to be placed on human development, a process of enhancing capability and expanding choices.*



A woman in Rangpur irrigating field by the 'dhek' system

IN Bangladesh, widespread poverty and overwhelming human deprivation calls for policy reforms that promote efficiency and growth objective along with reduction in poverty. Some of the positive impact of policy reforms on poverty can be accelerated by concentrating on correcting distortions that disadvantage the poor and by directing public spending towards basic physical infrastructure and social services. In particular, growth policies can be made more amenable to the poor by reinforcing them with investments in basic infrastructure and social services which facilitate their accumulation of physical and human capital. Within the approach, the focus needs to be placed on human development, a process of enhancing capability and expanding choices. The key issues relate to people's deprivation and their degree of access to various options for human development. The emphasis has to be given on human factor which is the instruments as well as the ultimate objective of development. This has certain implications. First, it involves enhancement of capacity to develop socio-political institutions for production and allocation as well as ability to invest in human beings to enhance their capabilities in shaping their own future. Secondly, development involves equitable access to benefits through removing the socio-economic and other constraints of the disadvantaged groups. Thirdly, development is empowerment providing for built-in mechanisms for equitable growth. Finally, development is concerned with sustainability to ensure proper long term management of resources. The above involves development of the people and his macro and micro-environments so that human development becomes an integral component of the development process.

It must be realized, however, that the link between poverty and human development is rather complex. The economic condition of the households is the outcome of their command over resources: physical, financial, human and others. The households differ in their degree of command over such resources and as such poverty entails limited command over resources. The command over resources by the households is determined by a number of structural and other features of the economy e.g. ownership of assets, available skills and their marketability, prices for use/sale

of assets, prices of goods and services, net transfers etc as well as macro-policies affecting the households. Therefore, human development as a means to alleviating poverty is to be seen as the entire spectrum through which human capabilities of the poor are expanded and utilized to progressively enhance their command over resources for adequate access to income and other basic needs.

## Poverty and Human Resources

A review of the poverty situation in Bangladesh suggests that the majority of the rural

poor are marginal and landless farmers, agricultural labourers and other assetless non-agricultural workers. Similarly, the urban poor are overwhelmingly dominated by the participants in the informal sector. Therefore, examination of the changing conditions of these groups is likely to provide an understanding of the relationship between poverty and human resources.

Over the years, one of the marked structural change in status of employment has been the shift of labour from rural to urban areas and from farm to non-farm activities in the rural areas. The share of the urban

sector in the labour force increased from 10 per cent to 22 per cent over the 1974-1989 period. Between 1974 and 1986, the share of agricultural labour declined from 78 per cent to 57 per cent. Given the rapid growth in civilian labour force and sluggish growth of the economy, un- and under employment rates are quite high in Bangladesh. Underemployment is the highest among casual as well as female labourers, particularly among those involved in agricultural activities.

Generally, rural workers can be divided into three categories: self-employed, regular wage/salary earners and casual labourers. A similar categorization of the urban poor is also applicable. Although there are no reliable data on the trends in these categories of labourers, the share of casual labourers seems to have increased in both agriculture and non-agriculture and they form the majority of the hard-core poor. While the linkage effect of agricultural productivity growth and the trickle-down effects of such growth on rural poverty point to the importance of maximizing these elements, the overall impact on poverty of the above strategies has been limited due to overwhelming magnitude and intensity of poverty in Bangladesh. Many poor households remain outside the purview of these growth-oriented programmes and have to be provided with "safety-nets" through various wage and self-employment programmes.

In the light of the experiences during the 1980s, three avenues for poverty alleviation could be identified: fostering growth-oriented programmes with strong immediate impact on poverty; enforcing higher investment in social sectors leading to increased human capital formation and improved living standards; and promoting targeted income and employment generating programmes designed to support the vulnerable poor particularly those left-out of the mainstream of the market-based development process.

The first strategy refers to acceleration of growth in both the farm and non-farm sectors. While appropriate technological and other innovations can

play major roles in the farm sector, there exists significant potential for expansion of non-farm activities in the rural areas. The urban industries have not provided significant growth linkages so far with the possible exception of the garment industry. A large number of semi-skilled female workers (mostly migrants from the rural areas) are now employed in the garment industry. Although the value added in the industry is rather low, its employment creation capacity is high, especially for the poor women. In order to further enhance the benefits to the rural poor, garments and similar other industries could be relocated in the peri-urban areas as well as in the rural areas with required infrastructural facilities. In a broad sense, the general strategy should focus on identification and acceleration of poverty-focused growth elements in the economy.

The second strategy brings into focus the importance of human resource development as a sustainable strategy for poverty reduction. In particular, efficient investments in selected areas in social sectors like health and education can contribute towards poverty alleviation and facilitate the realization of full growth potentials of the economy. Good health and educational attainment are obviously important for the poor to raise their productivity and improve living conditions. The limited access of the poor to educational opportunities, for both primary education and general or technical education, restricts the scope for enhancing their skills and productivity. In view of the existence of a segmented labour market, the poor are forced to become participants in the low-wage sector.

The third strategy refers to the targeted approach for the 'hardcore' poor both in the rural and urban areas. The expansion of targeted income and employment programmes under both the government and non-government initiatives like Vulnerable Group Development (VGD), Maternity and Child Health (MCH), Small Farmers' Development Programmes (SFDP), Rural Poor Programme (RPP) and similar ones can become effective in providing "safety nets" to the poor in the short and medium run as well as contribute towards human resource development.

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# Let Good Maps be Available to the Professionals

by Sayeed Ahmed

*Good and reliable topographical maps, like many other basic resources, are scarce in Bangladesh. The professionals working in different fields of infrastructure development are the first sufferers of such scarcity in having to deal with out-of-date and non-standard maps. The ultimate sufferers are the whole country and its people who have to pay for the increased costs and unsatisfactory performance of the projects.*

THE importance of reliable topographical maps for infrastructure development can hardly be over-emphasized. Any kind of infrastructure development — be it for roads, bridges, embankments, reservoirs, pipelines, buildings or whatever — needs topographic maps of adequate accuracy and scale. If such developments are not based on topographical information of minimum standard and accuracy, the investments are very much likely to be malutilized, if not totally wasted. And the development might prove to be just the opposite — performance far below anticipation, undesirable socio-economic and environmental impacts, and economic return not adequate to justify investment in the first place — meaning that the catchment population were better off before project implementation.

The non-availability of maps has become a 'nuisance' problem to the professionals working in Bangladesh. What is available with the Government for release to the projects are the works of the British colonial rulers and limited updates prepared during the sixties. Some government agencies have now endeavored to pre-

pare their own maps on a local level as decades-old maps are not of any use unless for historical reasons. However, such works are also based on the archaic topographical maps as it won't be possible for everyone to undertake a detailed survey of all the topographical features. The rivers have changed their courses, settlement pattern have become totally different, landuse and cropping pattern have changed, water bodies have dried up to meet increased pressure for cropping, erosion and accretion have altered the coastline, administrative boundaries have been amended — so many things have changed that one cannot do any kind of planning without doing the field investigations of one's own. This incurs a significant amount of time and money. If project planning is based on such old maps, there is every possibility that a road or transmission line will be unnecessarily laid through fertile lands or homesteads, a cyclone shelter will be sited just in the sea, or a polder might result in water logging and local flooding. Even in the initial stages of planning and feasibility studies, the presently avail-

able maps are not adequate without extensive field verification and checks. A field survey work takes several months and if this can be avoided or the extent can be minimized, the amount of money saved will probably be significant, not to speak of the amount that is wasted or mis-spent because projects are executed on incorrect or inadequate map data.

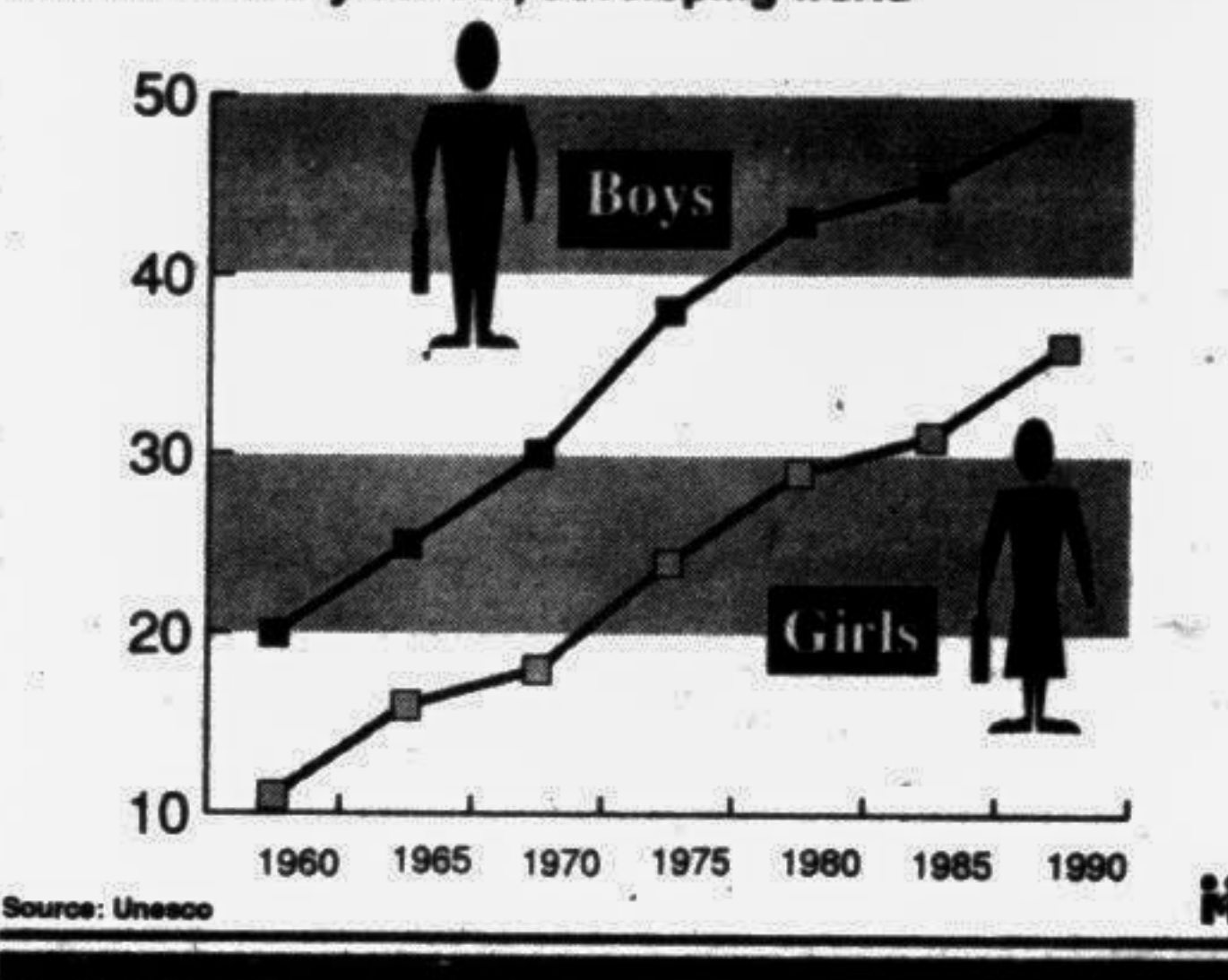
Now what are the constraints that prevent the professionals from having access to up-to-date maps? Is it not available? If you are staying in Bangladesh the answer is a flat no. Reasons are many: strategic values of aerial photographs do not permit them to be released to civilian projects, technical reasons do not allow satellite imagery to be available for project use, and above all, bureaucratic control is omnipresent like the ghost on Sindbad's shoulders. But are these reasons really of any worth? With present day technology, which are commercially available and getting more and more affordable every day, one can easily map, for example, a 100 km long road within 2 to 3 hours without being noticed. Outside Bangladesh, one can walk in to the sales office of a satellite operating company and order imagery of any region of any country of the world without being asked a single question. What the rest of the world can access so easily is restricted to the professionals who are working for the betterment of the country and its people. Such things are possible only in a country like ours where there is no one, at least not among the policy makers, to realize the value of up-to-date information in planning and development processes.

Can't we ease the restrictions on information? It has now become a prerequisite for any kind of development work that a full scale mapping of the country is undertaken and such maps are made available to the professionals who really need them.

The writer is associated with the DDC.

## Leap in literacy

% in secondary school, developing world



# "Keroneem" to Prevent Mosquito

by SK L Mohammed Lalou

NEEM tree (Mangosa) is one of the oldest medicinal plants of Bangladesh. Scientists of the western world have achieved substantial success in producing high quality pesticides and fertilizers through using different parts of Neem. Production of many kinds of life saving drugs out of it is within sight. Research is being carried to explore the possibilities of using Neem to combat deadly disease AIDS.

Neem could be used to combat the bacteria of Hepatitis B, Meningitis, Malaria and Diabetes. Much progress has been achieved by the scientists in the field of birth control through using the components of Neem.

Western scientists already identified some biologically active compounds out of Neem oil, seed and leaves. The compounds named 'lemonones'. Scientists are now engaged in carrying research to obtain further services from Neem, side by side they are examining other prospects. They have opined that the Neem pesticide is much higher in quality to DDT and other chemical pesticides of the same group. According to scientists chemical pesticides contain ingredients harmful to environment and animal.

Neem contains no harmful ingredients. Moreover, most pests develop natural power of resistance to chemical pesticides. But for Neem no such resistance would develop. Now research in this sector advanced much in India, Germany, UK, USA and Japan. Some important conferences on Neem were held in the west. Neem is considered an original natural asset of Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and entire southeast Asia. Now Neem tree can be found in more than 30 countries including Fiji, Philippines, Caribbean Islands, Mauritius and Latin American countries. Neem can also be found in the south portion of USA.

Thousands of Neem tree have been planted recently in Saudi Arabia to protect the Hajj pilgrims from the

scorching sun. Meanwhile, it is being tried to utilise the analysed extracts of Neem as insecticide and in other products. In Australia there is a type of fly that creates wound on sheep skin. Many of these sheep succumb to death prematurely due to the wounds. It has been established through research that Neem contains antidote for the injuries and a fly repellent. Neem has been planted in Queensland at a cost of 4 million dollars. Steps have also been taken to distribute Neem derivative drugs among the shepherds.

Different parts of the Neem tree are being used as medicine. Neem leaves are used to protect grains from insects. Water boiled with Neem leaves is used to bathe patients of scabies and pox. Neem leaf is known to have medicinal properties. Neem stems are utilized as tooth brush and tooth pick. Timber from Neem tree is used to make furniture. Oil is extracted from it. Usually Neem oil is used to control lice. The residual cake after extracting oil is used as compost. Using oil cake as compost prevents infestation of termites and katul insect.

While Neem tree is gaining importance in developed countries, they are on the verge of extinction in Bangladesh. This is why it has become so much important to preserve Neem and its different species.

Mosquitoes are a problem in the urban and rural areas. The country has to import chemical insecticides and mosquito repellent coils and sprays worth thousands of dollars every year to control mosquito menace. Use of chemical insecticide is causing environment pollution. The insecticide that is being produced commercially to be used against mosquitoes is harming people. The insecticides banned in the developed countries are all being freely traded in the third world countries.

To get rid of mosquitoes it adds to new health hazards for human beings. Apart from the other harmful chemicals, the smoke from mosquito repellent coils give off carbon

monoxide that chokes the lungs. According to scientists, the smoke from mosquito repellent may damage brains, eyes and lungs.

In recent times, fragrance is being added to the mosquito repellent mats, the aim is to increase its demand. Even, mosquito repellent creams are being marketed now which, if applied to the skin, will repel mosquitoes. In such creams, lemon oil is mixed with diethyl and phenyl pharvacide. The multinational companies producing mosquito repellent mats and creams are extending their business worldwide to earn millions. We know that the harmful components of coils, mats, creams and insecticides used against mosquitoes. This causes serious side effects in human and damage to the environment.

A new product against mosquitoes has been innovated in Bangladesh for the first time, using locally available materials and appropriate technology. It is named "Keroneem Liquid". It is a mixture of kerosene and Neem oil. Kerosene can be purchased even in the remotest village. The villages can easily repel mosquitoes by mixing kerosene and Neem oil. The new product has been innovated to meet such an end.

The preparation of "Keroneem", 85 parts of kerosene and 15 parts of Neem oil can easily be made. Ten millilitres of "Keroneem" is mixed with 1 litre of water and the mixture sprayed at every two to three weeks interval. The life cycle of mosquitoes is sustained by the stagnant water in the countryside.

Kerosene makes a thin film on water so that mosquitoes cannot lay eggs. Neem oil destroys the eggs, larva and pupae. Thus, the life cycle and propagation of mosquitoes are destroyed. "Keroneem Liquid", a locally innovated alternative that uses local know how will be able to make its contribution to the public health and environment. — Development Features

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Malaysians are on a mission. If they complete it successfully, the generation born today will be the last one to grow up in a country labelled "developing".

Achieving industrialised nation status by the year 2020 is more than just a goal of Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad and other political and business leaders. It is a national obsession.

From new tourist resorts and theme parks to the expansion of companies manufacturing everything from electronics to the national car to construction of a massive hydroelectric dam for powering new factories, it is impossible to ignore the country's relentless economic development.

Newspapers and magazines are filled daily with stories on development. The year and the target are featured prominently on billboards, buildings and buses in towns throughout Malaysia. One company advertises its collection of 2020 mail order books. The theme has even found its way onto T-shirts, and a set of shrubs in a parking lot in the capital Kuala Lumpur has been meticulously shaped into the figure 2020.

The developed nation goal also shapes the thinking of many of Malaysia's 19 million people. Questions about contentious issues such as logging, rights of indigenous peoples, race relations and political freedoms are frequently brushed aside as though they are family matters not to be aired in public.

Even those who voice rare disapproval of aspects of the non-stop push for economic growth preface their complaints by saying: "We recognise the government must have funds for development but..." The single-mindedness is paying dividends.

Malaysia's growth has been driven by an industrialisation policy brought in by Mahathir when he came to power in the early 1980s. With an emphasis on foreign investment and joint venture projects, the thrust of the economy has switched from agriculture to manufacturing. When the latest reforms began a decade ago, manufactured goods constituted only 25 per cent of all exports. In 1993, that total had risen to 71 per cent of a much higher export volume.

The Prime Minister also continually stresses attracting for-

# Malaysian Eyes Seeing 20/20 on Economic Vision

Daniel Girard writes from Kuala Lumpur

eigners through investments in tourism projects. In opening a hot springs resort in his home state earlier this year, Mahathir said people should exploit the land around them by building and operating hotels and other tourists attractions to improve their standard of living.

Following a recession in the mid 1980s, gross domestic product (GDP) — the value of all goods and services produced in the country — has grown by 8 per cent a year for the past six years. It is projected to grow by 8.4 per cent in 1994. The average annual GDP growth for developing countries as a whole was 4.9 per cent between 1988 and 1993.

Between 1990 and this year, per capita income in Malaysia has increased more than 30 per cent from RM 6,238 to RM 9,134. Unemployment has fallen from 4.3 per cent to 3.0 per cent.

But while Mahathir wants to follow the pro development path of Western nations and to join the select company of industrialised nation leaders, he has no interest in walking the same political path.

The country's strong economic performance and stable

government underpin Mahathir's willingness to verbally take on the world's most powerful nations. His repeated chastisement of Western leaders for their attempts to influence internal events in Malaysia and other so-called Third World countries have made him a voice not just of Malaysia but of all developing countries.

In a May meeting in Washington with United States President Bill Clinton, Mahathir said Malaysia and other Asian nations will accept opinions from the US on what Americans consider right and wrong but warned "strong arm tactics" will not work.

"If you go beyond criticism and take actions in order to force us to bow to your demands then you are twisting our arms and that we will not accept," Mahathir is reported to have said at the meeting.

Mahathir snubbed Clinton last November by refusing to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation or APEC conference in Seattle because he said there was a danger of it becoming dominated by the US.

Many of the criticisms of Malaysia's development path have focussed on the environ-

ment in general and rainforests in particular. As the major world exporter of tropical timber, which is its second largest export earner after petroleum products, Malaysia has been under increasing foreign pressure to stop or dramatically reduce logging in the interests of global greenness.

Mahathir and other government officials have stressed that it is unfair for the industrialised world to dictate how Malaysia and other developing nations should manage their natural resources. In the interest of economic growth, poorer nations are just doing what richer countries had done decades earlier, they say.

"It's a double standard by the West," says Goh Kiam Seng, executive director of the Centre for Environmental Technologies in Kuala Lumpur. "The West went through its development and created a pollution and environment problem that was much more severe than the one we've had."

Goh is not alone in his thoughts. Many Malaysians deflect any criticism of their system by highlighting the environmental and societal degradation that has been wrought

by economic growth in the West. Unable to lead by example, developed countries are turning to rhetoric in an attempt to keep poorer countries in their place, according to the argument.

"The sanctimonious pronouncements on humanitarian, democratic and environmental issues are motivated by the same selfish interest — the desire to put as many obstacles as possible in the way of anyone attempting to catch up and compete with the West," Mahathir said in a speech in Beijing recently.

Most in Malaysia applaud Mahathir for using an international stage to stand up to the West on the right of developing countries to control their resources and destiny. But domestically there is criticism of the impact on the environment and indigenous peoples of his pro development stand. "It's a love hate relationship," says an environmentalist in Kuala Lumpur who asked not to be identified.

Public debates on the massive Bakun hydro-electric project in Sarawak on the island of Borneo, which will displace about 7,000 members of the Orang Ulu community, have been stifled and non-governmental organisations are often harassed and the country's social problems are talked about but not addressed, the environmentalist says.

But with a booming economy, no effective political opposition and a desire to be remembered for writing his country's name on the list of industrialised countries, Mahathir makes no apologies for stepping on a few toes along the way.

"With strong governments we have been able to concentrate on doing what is right rather than what is popular," Mahathir said in the Beijing speech. "We have had leadership that is prepared to lead, that has always had to satisfy the people but never to pander excessively to the gallery."

— Gemini News

The writer is a reporter with 'The Toronto Star' newspaper currently on a one year internship with Gemini News Service sponsored by the International Development Research Centre in Ottawa.

## ASEAN on the fast track

