

RURAL POVERTY TRENDS

Times of Hope, Times of Despair

by Hossain Zillur Rahman

POVERTY excites a lot of debates in particular its short-term directionalities. Over and beyond these debates, however, some conclusions are inescapable. After every last statistical adjustment has been made, the challenge of rural poverty in Bangladesh remains a monumental one with nearly half the rural population living in poverty of which approximately half are in extreme poverty. The challenge of poverty alleviation in Bangladesh is squarely one of scale. Incremental changes become frequently reversible and such reversible mobility is starkly counterposed to the more significant task of economic graduation.

do transform social outcomes into ones which are quite different from those predicted through deductive logic. The challenge of meaningful poverty analysis is thus foremost also a challenge of epistemology, of going beyond any empirically limiting terms of reference which may be inherent in narrowly conceived deductive logic. Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) initiated the Analysis of Poverty Trends Project in 1989 precisely on such an objective, to be alert to the changing complexities of ground realities and thereby draw out the dynamic lessons most meaningful towards empowering the livelihood struggles of the poor. The Project has been monitoring rural poverty trends on a continuous basis on a nationally representative sample of rural households spread over 62 villages across the country (the sample was selected in 1987 for an earlier BIDS study). The same set of households have been monitored over time and findings from this massive exercise has just been presented in a special BIDS Seminar under the report titled 1987-1994: Dynamics of Rural Poverty in Bangladesh. The Report is edited by Hossain Zillur Rahman, Mahabub Hossain and Binayak Sen while contributors additionally include Sharifa Begum, Rushidan Islam Rahman, Raisul Awal Mahmud and Ahmed Kamal. Major findings are summarised below in a poverty balance-sheet.

and 7 per cent during 1989-94. Rural poverty has shown unmistakable though modest improvement over the period 1987-94. Based on income measure, the proportion of people living in poverty fell from 57.5 per cent in 1987 to 51.7 per cent in 1994. It should be noted that expenditure measures of poverty may give somewhat lower levels though this does not change the finding on directionally. The decline in rural poverty was evident, for both moderate and extreme poor. Moderate poverty declined from 31.7 per cent in 1987 to 29.2 per cent in 1994. Over the same period, extreme poverty declined from 25.8 per cent to 22.5 per cent.

virtually nil; areas of growth mainly were services, trade and non-crop agriculture. 61 per cent of the increase in rural income at the margin is contributed by labour, 36 per cent by land and only 7 per cent by capital. An important factor behind the improvement in rural economic conditions has been the drastic reduction in the growth of rural population due to rapid rural-urban migration and reduction in natural growth of population. Rural-urban migration reduced rural population by nearly 1 per cent per year during 1987-94 while the child-woman ratio dropped from 77 to 50 per cent over the same period. Average size of the household declined from 6.16 in 1988 to 5.95 in 1995.

Labour force participation rate for rural males decreased from 86 to 82 per cent during 1987-94 while the corresponding rate increased from 7.4 to 11.2 per cent for rural females. Incidence of child labour show a decline in labour force participation rate from 19.6 to 11.8 per cent during 1988-95. For boy children, the decline is from 30.4 to 20.7 per cent while for girl children it is from 7.1 to 1.8 per cent. Number of workers employed in agriculture declined in absolute terms between 1988 and 1995. The share of non-agricultural activities increased from 34.5 to 44.5 per cent over the survey period.

while the decline has been in the ranks of the mixed owner-tenant category. Pure owner category increased from 38 to 45 per cent over the period while non-cultivator households declined from 32.5 to 30 per cent. The proportion of land under tenancy also declined by 6 percentage points. Savings and investment: The proportion of negative savers among rural households declined from 55 to 40 per cent between 1989 and 1994. However, the proportion of households displaying high savings rate (in excess of 10 per cent) is still very low at less than a fifth of rural households. Average private investment rate in rural Bangladesh con-

tinues to be very low at only 6.7 per cent in 1994. Crisis and Income Erosion: While the proportion of rural households who suffer natural disaster type of crisis show strong variability, those routinely exposed to illness expenditure-related crisis and insecurity-related crisis are relatively stable at around 40 per cent and 15 per cent respectively. About 4 per cent of rural households regularly suffer from dowry-related crisis. The magnitude of average annual income erosion per household is estimated at taka 7839 in 1994. Average income erosion per household constitutes on average 15.5 per cent of average household annual income. For extreme poor households, the corresponding percentage is as high as 27

acute illness show a substantial decline from 16.2 per cent in 1984 to 4.3 per cent in 1995. Public health system play a strikingly minor role in the provision of curative services to rural population. Only 12 per cent of rural sickness are treated in the network of government health centres. Their role is somewhat more significant in the case of major illness. Rural population suffer an average of 13 days per episode of acute illness and 72 days per episode of major illness. Duration of forced inactivity is on average a week for acute illness and a month for major illness. Rural population on average incur an expenditure of taka 342 on acute illness, taka 2680 on major illness and taka 83 per month on repeat illness. Education: School participation rate for the 6-10 age group increased from 56 per cent to 70 per cent during 1990-95. The rate of increase has been faster for girl children. Improvement in the participation rate in secondary schools has been marginal. The rate currently is 29 per cent for the relevant age group. Clothing: Proportion of rural population without minimum clothing declined from 15.4 per cent in 1990 to 3.5 per cent in 1995. The decline was true for both male and female. Housing: The proportion of rural households living in extreme vulnerable housing, i.e. Jhupri, declined from 9 to 2 per cent during 1990-95. Sanitation: Use of sanitary toilets increased from 7 to 22 per cent of rural households during 1990-95. Use of open space over the same period declined from 50 to 25 per cent.

The hope lies in the survival resilience and attitudinal changes in the rural society. The despair springs from the fragility as well as the modesty of the change process. The challenge is not of survival but of graduation so that not just poverty but also the spectre of poverty becomes a thing of the past

The Poverty-Gap ratio declined from 21.7 per cent in 1987 to 19.2 per cent in 1994. The FGT index declined from 13.5 in 1989 to 9.6 in 1994. The degree of income inequality has remained unchanged over the 1989-94 period. However, the absolute level of income inequality remain fairly high; Gini ratio for concentration of per capita incomes was 0.4 in 1994. During the 1989-94 period, non-crop agriculture and services contributed to an worsening in income distribution while crop production and trade contributed to an improvement in income distribution. Average rural household income grew at the rate of 2.9 per cent during 1987-94. Growth in crop income was

erage size of the household declined from 6.16 in 1988 to 5.95 in 1995. Self-Assessment: The improvement in the rural poverty situation as revealed through the income criterion is also corroborated by self-assessment by rural households on the nature of change in their economic condition. 39 per cent assessed improvement in their economic condition while 17 per cent assessed deterioration; 44 per cent assessed no change. Employment: Total employment per worker increased by 27 per cent for extreme poor households over the 1990-94 period. The corresponding increase for moderate poor households has been 22 per cent and for non-poor households 36 per cent.

However, expansion of non-agricultural employment has been in activities which are at the lower end of labour productivity. Growth in labour productivity in non-agriculture has been slow (0.3 per cent compared to non-agriculture) (8.3 per cent). Female-headed Households: Proportion of female-headed households was less than 5 per cent. However, one-fifth of rural households have at least one female earner. Incidence of poverty is higher in households with female earners than with only male members. Tenancy: The proportion of rural households involved in tenancy declined from 30 to 25 per cent during 1988-95. The percentage of pure tenants was constant at 9 per

cent. Vulnerability due to crisis events is relatively higher in the two northern Divisions of Dhaka and Rajshahi compared to the two southern Divisions of Chittagong and Khulna. Coping Capacities: Over 80 per cent of rural males and around 70 per cent of rural females have access to emergency credit. The greater majority of emergency credit sources are soft sources i.e. zero or low interest loans from kins and friends. Self-assessed average credit limit on emergency loans taka 6109 for rural males and taka 1772 for rural females in 1995. Increase across income groups is significant in case of males but not so in case of females. Expenditure-savings: Expenditure-savings for rural households arise in three sources; homestead forestry, product residuals and common property resources. The most important category of expenditure-savings is supplementary foods (taka 1374 per household per annum) followed by fuel items (taka 1177) and lastly, house-building materials (taka 568). Total annual expenditure-savings per household was Taka 4461 in 1994. It was taka 6767 in 1990. For rural Bangladesh as a whole, expenditure-savings as a proportion of household income is 8.9 per cent. This proportion rises to 22.5 per cent in the case of extreme poor households. Scope for expenditure-savings has been declining over time. The decline is the most severe in the case of fish (41 per cent of households report such a decline). Decline has been greater in the two northern Divisions of Dhaka and Rajshahi compared to the southern Divisions of Chittagong and Khulna. Migration: Life-time migration represents 7.5 per cent of total panel households in 1990. Of the total of individual migrants, 71 per cent are economic migrants. Health: There has been a general improvement in health status over the 1988-95 period. However, 12 per cent or 2.2 million people still remain chronically ill and 2.3 per cent or 470,000 are disabled. Overall morbidity rate for rural Bangladesh is 12.5 per cent. The rate for repeat illness is 9 per cent and for major illness is 4 per cent. Morbidity risk does not show noticeable variation across economic classes. This tends to indicate that non-food physical environment may still be the dominant determinant of rural health status. Health risks for rural men and women are basically the same, namely, environmental hazards. The only area of outstanding difference is reproductive health of women. Maternal risks is a pervasive phenomenon and improvement in household economic status show no lowering of such risks. This points towards a critical problem of inadequate provision and practice of safe motherhood for rural women irrespective of economic condition. Point Prevalence Rate for

A Poverty Balance-Sheet, 1987-94. Income: Per capita rural income in 1994 was taka 8803 or US Dollars 220 at current prices. The Poverty Line Income for this year was Taka 6287 for US Dollars 158; the Income Line for extreme poverty was taka 3757 or US dollars 94, both at current prices. The rate of change in the poverty line income was 4.4 per cent during 1987-89

Why Nice Mr Fernando was a Dangerous Drug Abuser

Dr Sanjiva Wijesinha is grateful to patients who do not rush to him with every little ailment. But he warns that people who pop down to the pharmacy to buy medicine without a prescription are often contributing to a worldwide health crisis. Gemini News Service reports on antibiotic abuse.

Dr Sanjiva Wijesinha writes from Colombo. The antibiotic boom. Sales: Europe 25%, Japan 32%, Rest of world 10%, North America 33%. As a % of national pharmaceutical sales: Iran 31%, Middle East 29%, Indonesia 25%, Philippines 23%, Mexico 15%. Total value: \$15.5bn. People like Mr Fernando have been unwittingly contributing to an emerging worldwide health crisis...

tributing to an emerging worldwide health crisis - the basic cause of which is the ability of bacteria to develop resistance to antibiotics. Among the billions of bacteria infecting Mr Fernando's throat would have been a small, tougher group which was slightly better equipped to fight off the effects of the drug. If just enough medicine was taken to kill only the other, susceptible, germs, the few remaining resistant ones could have survived to grow a new colony - and this new breed of bacteria would be relatively immune to the original antibiotic. Explains Dr H W Szeto, bacteriologist at Hong Kong's Queen Mary Hospital: 'Patients must stop thinking of antibiotics as harmless. Every antibiotic has a specific range of effectiveness, and must be taken with care, otherwise real harm can be done, with bacteria be-

ing given more opportunities to develop immunity to the drug.' Patients such as Mr Fernando are not the only drug abusers. While people who swallow antibiotics without prescription constitute a major problem, doctors who prescribe antibiotics unnecessarily must also accept a fair share of the blame. Most unhelpful of all are the patients who shop around - getting drugs from one doctor, taking them for a day and then, because they have not got a quick cure, going to another doctor without disclosing that they have already started a course of drugs. Mr Fernando would never have dreamed of using a really harmful drug - not even tobacco - and would have been most upset if he heard me describing him as a drug abuser. But my abusing antibiotics, over the years he and well-meaning people like him have been contributing to a massive public health problem. DR SANJIVA WIJESINHA is a medical specialist who has practised in Sri Lanka, Hong Kong, England and Australia.

WHEN I was a young doctor in the Sri Lankan city of Galle, the only neighbour who never consulted me about his ailments was Mr Fernando. Everyone else would stop me in the street or the shops and ask me what they should do about their aching knee or latest bout of back pain. Not Mr Fernando. He was not angry with my family, and nor was he in perfect health. The truth, I discovered years later, was that he treated himself. Mr Fernando's 'heal thyself' attitude has much to be said for it. But though do-it-yourself medicine may often be a relief for the neighbourhood doctor, it has dangers. Sad though it is for me to describe him thus, my old friend Mr Fernando was a dangerous drug abuser. If he felt a sore throat coming on, for example, he would pop down to the pharmacy and buy a supply of antibiotics. It is an approach which suits both drug-takers and drug-sellers: the former because they do not need to spend time and money consulting a doctor for a prescription, the

The Daily Star Entertainment Guide

Saturday 20th July (All programmes are in local time. We recommend programmes printed in bold. There may be changes in the programmes). BTV 3:00pm Opening Announcement Al-Quran 3:10 Recitation from the Tripitak 3:15 Movie of the Week 4:00 News in Bangla 5:00 News in Bangla 5:25 Bantshort: Folk Songs 6:00 News in Bangla 6:05 Angkor 6:30 Monek Mukura 7:00 News in English 8:00 News in Bangla 8:30 Mati-o-Manush: Programme Based on Agricultural Development 9:00 Bharu Nadir Banke 10:00 News in English 10:30 Shasthakatha: Health Programme 10:35 Drama Series: Dynasty 11:30 News in Bangla 11:35 Tomorrow's programme summary 11:40 Close down. BBC 6:00am BBC World News 6:20

Britain in View 7:00 BBC World News 7:10 Newsnight 8:00 BBC World News 8:20 Window On Europe 9:00 BBC World Headlines 9:05 Correspondent 10:00 BBC World News 10:20 The Arts Marathon 11:00 BBC World News 11:20 Window On Europe 12:00noon BBC World Headlines 12:05 Everyman 1:00 BBC World Headlines 1:05 Inside Burma: Land Of Fear 2:00 BBC World News 2:30 Time Out: Tomorrow's World 3:00 BBC World News 3:30 Time Out: Summer Holiday 4:00 BBC World Headlines 4:05 Horizon 5:00 BBC World News 5:20 Britain in View 5:50 Earth Report 6:00pm BBC World Headlines 6:05 Under The Blue Flag 7:00 BBC World News 7:20 This Week 8:00 BBC World News 8:30 Time Out: Building Sights 9:00 BBC World Headlines 9:05 Correspondent 10:00 BBC World News 10:30 Time Out: Auction 11:00 BBC World News 11:20 This Week 12:00pm BBC World News 12:20 The Art Marathon 1:00 BBC World Headlines 1:05 Horizon 2:00 BBC World News 2:30 Time Out: Top



Javed Jafferri on Channel V at 10:30 PM Tonight. Gear 3:00 BBC World News 3:25 Window On Europe 4:00 BBC World News 4:25 This Week 5:00 BBC World News 5:20 The Art Marathon. CHANNEL V 8:30am Asian Top 20 VJ News 10:30 Big Bang Weekend VJ Alessandra 12:30 Billboard US Countdown 2:30 The Ride VJ Trey 3:00 Rewind VJ Sophie 4:00 House Of Noise VJ Luke 5:30 (V)'s 6:00pm The Vibe Weekend VJ The Luke 8:00 BPL Dye! 9:00 The Ticket 9:30 Timez Time Pass 10:00 The Best Of Time Pass 10:30 Videoclan Flashback 11:30 Visualise A del L'appard Special 1:30 The Ticket 1:50 The Ride VJ Trey 2:00 Music Update Tokyo 2:30 Over The Edge VJ Gokuya 3:30 Big Bang VJ Alessandra 4:00 Frame by Frame. STAR PLUS 6:30am Voltren 7:00 Dungeons and Dragons 7:30 Around The World in 80 Days 8:00 Count Duckula 8:30 Sabar Rider & The Star Sheriff 9:00 Capital Critters 9:30 ZooLife With Jack Hanna 10:00 Katts & Dog 10:30 Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea 11:30 Special The Crown of Bruns

Zealand vs Australia 'A From Kuala Lumpur 11:30 Super 8's India vs Australia from Kuala Lumpur 1:30 Super 8's Australia vs South Africa From Kuala Lumpur 3:30 Live: Cricket 96 Natwest Under 19 One Day Int's England vs New Zealand 2nd One Day Int'l 7:15 Asia Sport Show 7:45 Continued Live Cricket 96 Natwest Under 19 One Day Int's England vs New Zealand 2nd One Day Int'l 11:30 Spark 4 12:30 Inside PGA Tour 25 (28) 1:00 The Bahamas 2:00 World Cup Classic Matches 1966 Portugal vs North Korea Quarter Final 4:00 Australian Football League Highlights 5:00 International Motorsport News 5:30 High 5 III. STAR MOVIES 8:00 Comedy A Private Function (Arabic Subtitles) 9:30 Classic: The Gift Of Love PG (Arabic Subtitles) 11:30 Romance: A Woman Named Jackie (Hindi Subtitles) 3:30 Family: The New Adventures of William Tell PG (Hindi Subtitles) 5:30 Family: Journey To The Magic Cavern (Hindi Subtitles) 7:30 Family: Undercover Kid (Hindi Subtitles) 9:00 The Preview 9:30 Battle Cries: The Longest Day (Hindi Subtitles) 11:30 The Curious Effect 1:30 Fight Night: The Hidden (Hindi Subtitles) 3:30 Film Club: Smash Palace (Hindi Subtitles) 5:30 Comedy: Privates On Parade 18 (Hindi Subtitles). ZEE TV 6:00 News 6:30 Jagran 7:00 A To Z Computer 8:00 NBA Inside 8:30 World Wrestling Federation Mania 9:30 Super 8's New

10:30 Gaane Anjaana 11:00 Shahi Dawat 11:30 Cartoons 12:00 Philips Top Ten 1:00 Tol Mol Ke Bol 1:30 Asian Sky Show 2:30 Nerolac Ashana 3:00 Positive Health Show 3:30 Zake Ka Safar 4:00 No Problem 4:30 TVS Sa Re Ga Ma 5:00 Galaxee 6:00 Commander 6:30 Tumhare Lye 7:00 FLU 7:30 Sur Taal 8:00 Hoiplane 9:30 Maa 9:00 Assan Paints Yaadon Ke Rang 9:30 Tara 10:00 Tanaav 10:30 The News Round Up 11:00 Gollywood Aana 11:30 Player's Gold Action Movie: HFF 1:30 Calgate Gal Yoodle Y 2:00 Shakti 2:30 Zee Arabia: Arabic TMM 3:30 Zee Arabia Infotainment - TMM. EL TV 6:30 Ched Chad 7:30 Music Time 8:00am Tilawat Aur Tar. PTV 8:30 Taranne Aur Fasane 9:30 Best of the Best 10:30 Lakhm Advance Booking 11:00 Zero Se Bol Anupam Khor Show 11:30 Karz 12:00 Special 81:00 Special 07:00 Special 3:00 Fat or Fit 3:30 Karm (Sensal) 4:00 Tere V. Chup 4:30 The Moon Usha Uthoo Show 5:00 Pichha Karo 05:30 Special 6:30 Special (Hit Gaan) 7:30 Zake Ka Safar 8:00 Jawab Do 8:30 Frooti Its My Chose 9:00 Amar Prem 9:30 Peoples Club 10:00 Sorry Men Lorry 10:30 Situla 11:30 Special 12:00 Newsline 12:30 Dance Dance 1:30 Best of the Best 2:30 Tarana Aur Fasane 3:30 Music Time. juma/Hamd/Naat 8:20 Cartoon 8:30 Khabran 8:45 Visitors Book 9:10 Phool Khushboo 9:25 Das: tarikhwan 9:40 Mehman 10:05 Ang Ki Anwar Maqsood 10:30 English Film Tarzan 10:55 Milk Naagma 11:00 Khabran 11:10 Meri Pasand 11:35 Janun 12:55 Duran-E-Hakeem 1:02 Bismillah 1:15 Grand 2:05 Larzelw 'Ep 33' 2:55 Husool-E-Insaf & Sports Coaching 3:20 TV Encyclopedia 3:40 Sports Time 4:05 Daastar 5:05 Medicine 5:25 Computers 6:20 Auu Courses 7:00 English News 7:20 PTV Music Library 7:30 Vrsa Pakistan 7:55 Ghazal Uss Naye Saaree 8:25 Dentonic Khabranama & Commercial News 10:35 TBA 11:55 The Flash Point 1:05 Urdu Feature Film Khat: Khabran-Close Down. DD 7 10:30 Janmadin 10:35 Movie Club

1:00 Movie Club Film: (Repr: Sash Theke Suru 1:30 Nijer Sange Dekha 2:00 Pratihangha 2:30 Banhala Chale Bhalo 3:00 Kenon Aachun 3:30 Comedy Qar: 4:45 Movie Club Film (Repr: Sri Jagannath 5:00 Jishu 5:30 Nijer Sange Dekha 6:00 Nirjan Dupure Premier Ganak 6:30 Pratihangha 7:00 Nandanak 7:30 Bangla Sambad 8:00 Dhitang Dhitang Bole 8:30 UJALA Surer Asar 9:00 TBA 9:25 Classical Music: 10:00 Drama 10:30 News and Bengali Sambad. ZEE CINEMA 9:30 The To Kamal Ho Gaya 11:15 Karam Yuth 12:30 Aab Kya Honga 6:00 Yateem 8:45 Box Office 9:30 Himmatwala 12:30 Insaaf Ki Pukar 3:45 Tangewala. DD 7 10:30 Janmadin 10:35 Movie Club



Bay Watch On Star Plus at 8:30 PM Tonight

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12:30 Movie: 'It's Good To Be Alive' 2:30 Movie Classics: 'Carnival Story' 4:30 Return of TV Censored Bloopers and Practical Jokes 5:30 Movie Television 6:00pm Fantasy Island 7:00 Thailand Panorama 7:30 The Addams Family 8:00 The Simpsons 8:30 Baywatch 9:30 Star Trek: The Next Generation 10:30 L A Law 11:30 Code 3 12:00am COPS 12:30 Mystery Movies: B L Stryker Part 5/12 2:30 Movie: Yanamara 4:30 Movie TV 5:00 The Sullivan 5:30 Wild West Show. STAR SPORTS 6:00am Spark 7:30 Gillette World Sport Special 8:00 NBA Inside 8:30 World Wrestling Federation Mania 9:30 Super 8's New. ZEE TV 6:00 News 6:30 Jagran 7:00 A To Z Computer 8:00 NBA Inside 8:30 World Wrestling Federation Mania 9:30 Super 8's New

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