

লোক-প্রশাসন সাময়িকী

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লোক-প্রশাসন সাময়িকী

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A New Systems Approach to Design Gender-Training for Government Officials in Achieving Higher National Productivity: Bangladesh Perspectives ১

Kazi Hasan Imam

Ombudsman : An Aid to Transparent and Accountable Government ৪১

Dr. M. Matiur Rahman

Urban Local Governance in Bangladesh : Some Arising Issues ৫৫

Dr. Md. Ghulam Murtaza

Refugee Assistance and Development : A Search for Self-Reliance ৭১

Abul Hossen

An Inquiry into the Nature and Consequences of Dowry in Rural Bangladesh - A Study of a Village ৮৯

Md. Gias Uddin

Mohammad Zulfiquar Hossain

A New Systems Approach to Design Gender- Training for Government Officials in Achieving Higher National Productivity : Bangladesh Perspectives

Kazi Hasan Imam*

Abstract: *The optimum National Productivity (NP) can be achieved when both men and women are developed as Human Resources (HR) with equal importance and they can work supportively together with their full potential. The measures of NP are generally depicted in a manner more economically tuned rather than socially valued. Women's contribution to economic development in the past often went unmeasured and unrecognized. Their potential were ignored, their access to services, assets and opportunities were restricted, rationed and sometimes denied by the patriarchal society. As a result, their productivity relative to their potential remained low. Social re-engineering of the existing value systems through gender-friendly attitudinal changes of people in the society would increase their productivity, which in turn, would help achieve higher NP. Social re-engineering of value systems calls for effective and sustainable training capable of changing attitudes of the society towards gender issues. Imparting such training to the Government officials, the key social change-agents in the developing nations, would be a step forward to this end. Gender-Training carried out so far around the developing world has never been able to address the problems emanated from the deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes of the society, rather it has become to be the charity functions of the sponsoring development partners. The new systems approach developed to design gender-training based on social engineering of attitudes would eventually demolish the existing attitudinal barriers creating dysfunctional impacts on Productivity Relations Systems (PRS) and would be of immense help for reversing women's roles in development. This would obviously, in turn, help achieve higher national productivity.*

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1.0 Introduction

National Productivity (NP) is a composite measure of how efficiently a nation converts its input resources into output goods and services. A nation's productivity performance and its ability to make meaningful improvements are determined by various factors. Human resources (HR) are considered as the central factor of productivity functions. Women folk constitute half of the country's total workforce. Therefore, the optimum NP can only be achieved when both men and women are developed as HR with equal importance and they can work supportively together with their full potential. But the persistent discrimination against women of various magnitudes in different gender issues do not support realization of their full potential.

Basically women have no identity of their own. They are identified as somebody's daughters or sisters or wives or mothers throughout their life—in reality, this is their so called social and family status. Kamla Bhasin has rightly pointed out that "nature produces males and females, society turns them into men and women, feminine and masculine" through its patriarchal attitudes, cultures and practices (Bhasin, 1999, p. 34, emphasis added). The practitioners have realised after decade-long development efforts that enhancing women's participation in development is essential not only for achieving social justice but also for reducing poverty and achieving higher NP. Analysing world-wide experiences the World Bank argued that supporting a stronger role for women contributes to economic growth, improves child survival and overall family health, reduces fertility, thus help to slow population growth rates (The World Bank, 1994, p. 7). Experience suggests that women produce half the food in some parts of the developing world, bear most of the responsibilities for household food security and make up a quarter of work force in industry and a third in services. In addition to income-generating activities, women's household activities include caring for the sick, maintenance of house and such vital works as caring for children, preparing food and fetching firewood and water. Despite these known returns, women still face

many barriers in contributing to and benefiting from development. The barriers begin with comparatively low investment in female education and health, continue with restricted access to services and assets and are made worse by social, legal and regulatory constraints on women's opportunities. As a result, the progress in development over the last few decades has not been translated into proportional gains for women and their productivity relative to their potential remained low.

Most women in Bangladesh still suffer deep discrimination. Their contribution to economic development in the past often went unmeasured and unrecognised (Mian, 1994, p. 2). The in-built biological advantage of girls is soon outweighed by social discrimination. The low status of women is deeply embedded in the traditional society that has valued girls much less than boys. Parents view a girl child as a temporary guest who will leave the household after marriage and cost a dowry. Even after marriage woman carries her low status into her new household (Monsoor, 1999, p. 32). The traditional subservient position of women is also enshrined in Bangladeshi laws. The problem of lack of participation of women in development and lack of access to opportunities basically emanates from religious laws, socio-cultural practices, illiteracy, religious superstitions etc. of the patriarchal society, which govern their lives.

However, despite historical reasons and persisting discrimination against women, the situation is improving. Many of the gaps are slowly narrowing. Some of the changes reflect broader movements in the society. NGOs are playing a vital role in ensuring women's participation in development activities. Their micro-credit programmes, conscientization efforts etc. provided a big breakthrough in this respect. Participation of women in the UP-election, Civil society movements, new literature on women's rights, new consciousness, enactment of new and strict laws, institutional changes and development, employment of women in formal sector establishments, development of women's economic power, adoption of the National Action Plan after the Beijing

Declaration in 1995 and the National Policy for the Advancement of Women in 1997, stipend programme for female education, formation of NCWD (National Council for Women's Development), establishment of hostel facilities for working women, Legal Aid Cell, shelters for oppressed women, National Action Plan for combating women's problems by different Ministries etc. are some of the glaring examples to this end.

Despite all these achievements, several positive interventions undertaken by the Government and massive donors' support over the last two decades, most women still enjoy much less opportunities in all respects like calorie intake, access to education, health care facilities, employment, freedom of and participation in decision making, share of hereditary property etc. as compared to men. Therefore, the efforts made so far could not reverse the women's roles in development and their expected productivity still remains in the dearth. That means, the problem lies elsewhere and the efforts made to this end appear to be a fly's push to move an iceberg. The present study intends to identify where the problems creating dysfunctional impact on the processes of ensuring women's access to opportunities and transforming them in productive workforce actually lie. It then attempts to devise a framework or systems approach, which would guide to offset the iceberg.

1.1 The Conceptual Framework of the Study

NP has both social and economic connotations. But experience suggests that the measures of NP are generally depicted in a manner more economically tuned rather than socially valued. Economists often understand productivity as the ability to produce something economically valued by someone. Nourishing children, caring sick, cooking food, fetching firewood and water etc. performed mostly by women have no productive value in our society. Moreover, the patriarchy puts hundreds of strong left hooks/barriers against women for which they cannot bloom with their full potentials; they cannot work and excel according to the abilities they actually or

might have. Due to the persistent discriminatory attitudes of the patriarchal society towards different gender issues their productivity always remains low. Thus, social re-engineering of the patriarchal gender-values through gender-friendly attitudinal changes of people in the society would increase their productivity, which in turn, would help achieve higher NP. Social re-engineering of gender-values calls for effective "counselling & motivational exercise training" capable of changing attitudes of the society towards gender issues.

Although Gender literature indicates the existence of as many as ten different systems approaches [e.g. (i) The Conceptual Approach, (ii) The Policy Analysis Approach, (iii) The Empirical Approach, (iv) The Action-Reflection Approach, (v) The Experiential Approach, (vi) The Women's Welfare Approach, (vii) The Institutional Approach, (viii) The Gender-Needs Approach, (ix) The Social Development Approach and (x) The Participatory Workshop Approach] to design gender-training, none of them could create a considerable impact on the persistent discriminatory attitudes of the society towards different gender issues. Gender-Training designed on the basis of the above mentioned systems approaches has been under implementation with massive donors' support for more than two decades. Still, it has not yet been institutionalised. In fact, no training institution owns such training; they have no effective and sustainable gender-training agenda; they impart gender-training only when donors' supports are available and they have time to do that (Kasente, 1998, p. 61). Gender-Training carried out so far around the developing world has never been able to address the problems emanating from the deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes of the society, rather it has become to be the charity functions of the sponsoring development partners.

Time demands that gender perspectives be incorporated into development approach as a whole and human development arena in particular (Rahman, 1998, p. 10). The present study considers "appropriate attitudinal changes" towards different gender issues as the driving force for social re-engineering of gender-values, which

would help ensure "women human resources development" and bring about a paradigm shift in the total productivity relations systems. The Government officials at different levels often work as a vital catalyst for any form of social change in our country. They are the planners and implementers of policies, plans and programmes formulated and undertaken by the Government. Their positive attitudes towards gender issues are very important to ensure appropriate formulation and implementation of those policies, plans and programmes in one hand and to bring about any change to this end in the society on the other. Therefore, imparting gender-training "based on social re-engineering of attitudes" to the Government officials, the key social change-agents in the developing nations, would be a step forward to this end. The present study has been designed first to assess their attitudes towards different gender issues which act as barriers to productivity systems and then to develop a systems approach to design gender-training for them so that they become more sensitised and gender responsive for playing catalytic roles in gender development.

Attitude of human beings is a very complex and dynamic phenomenon. Quantitative assessment of attitudes towards gender issues is rather more complex. There is no single parameter by which it can be measured. During mid '1990s, UNDP introduced a number of indices like Gender-related Development Index (GDI), Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) etc. for better understanding of the human development issues. In fact, GDI and GEM are composite measures reflecting gender inequalities in human development. The GDI measures achievements in the same dimensions by using the same variables as the Human Development Index (HDI). In addition to that it takes into account inequality in achievements between men and women. While the GEM measures gender inequality in economic and political opportunities (UNDP, 2000, p. 147).

The GDI and GEM are, of course, two powerful indices or tools to look into gender inequalities. But they cannot necessarily reflect how and to what extent gender inequalities emanate from the

patriarchal attitudinal problems and their resultant dysfunctional impacts on productivity relations systems. Although discriminative attitudes towards gender issues create gender inequalities, only GDI and GEM cannot assess them. Therefore, opinion surveys to look into the generic behavioural patterns of people towards different gender issues can be considered as an effective tool to overcome this problem. In this case the generosity and sincerity of respondents may not remain out of question. Moreover, gender problem is not a unisectoral but a cross-cutting issue. It varies from and within sectors, social institutions and class structures.

In the given circumstances, the present study considers "social re-engineering of attitudes" towards different gender issues as the driving force that would regulate the whole productivity systems' functions for increased NP. The underlying universally recognized gender issues have been considered for the study, which may be characteristically categorized into the following three major productivity input sub-systems for better understanding the existing and the conceived productivity relations systems' functions :

- (i) Physiological Input Sub-Systems that includes : (a) Access to Food and Nutrition, (b) Access to Health Care Facilities and (c) Reproductive Rights & Reproductive Health;
- (ii) Social Input Sub-Systems that includes : (a) Access to Education, (b) Access to Employment Opportunities, (c) Participation in the Nation Building Activities, (d) Political Participation, (e) Gender Values in Working Environment, (f) Gender Values Towards Generation Flow, and (g) Freedom of Decision Making; and
- (iii) Regulatory Input Sub-Systems that includes : (a) Birth Rights, (b) Heredity of Rights on Property and (c) Privileges and Empowerment.

Before going on to the detailed analysis of the universally recognized specific gender issues, the study would also look into

the reactions of people under study for understanding their level of awareness about gender issues.

1.2 The Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is "to devise a new systems approach" that can be adopted to design effective and sustainable gender training for the Government officials which would in turn help achieve higher NP. Since "attitudinal changes" have been considered as the "driving force" for such systems approach, the study would assess their existing attitudes towards universally recognized gender issues grouped into the aforesaid three major productivity input sub-systems. However, the specific objectives of the study are as follows :

- a. To assess and analyse the attitudes of the people concerned towards different universally recognized gender issues for understanding their functional relationships within the productivity relations systems;
- b. To devise a new systems approach capable of social re-engineering of gender values and that can be adopted to design effective and sustainable Gender-Training for achieving higher NP; and
- c. To suggest policy measures supportive to effective implementation of the proposed systems approach.

1.3 Rationale of the Study

Experience suggests that development goals cannot be achieved by keeping half of the country's productive workforces aloof from development initiatives. Ensuring mass participation of women in development requires inducement of gender indiscriminate access to services, assets and opportunities and a strongly supportive environment for them. The existing socio-cultural and religious values and practices, religious superstitions, mass illiteracy etc. strongly stand against these initiatives. The Government officials of different levels can play vital roles in eliminating such barriers. Their affirmative attitudinal changes towards gender issues would

reverse the women's roles in development and thus help achieve higher NP. The study intends to find out a means for bringing about such attitudinal changes in the society as a whole and in the Government officials in particular.

1.4 Scope and Limitations of the Study

Although, the attitudinal problems towards gender issues lie deep into the society (Monsoor, 1999, p. 2), the present study has included the views of the Government officers of different levels only. Psychological study suggests that they tend to be very rational in providing opinions on any issue. A crosscheck survey method has been adopted to check the veracity of their views. It was felt that anthropological study would have been better in this case, but it was not possible to conduct such study due to time and other constraints. The output of the study may be very helpful for the trainers, researchers, policy makers and the action programme managers of the relevant fields during implementation of plans or programmes.

2.0 Methodology of the Study

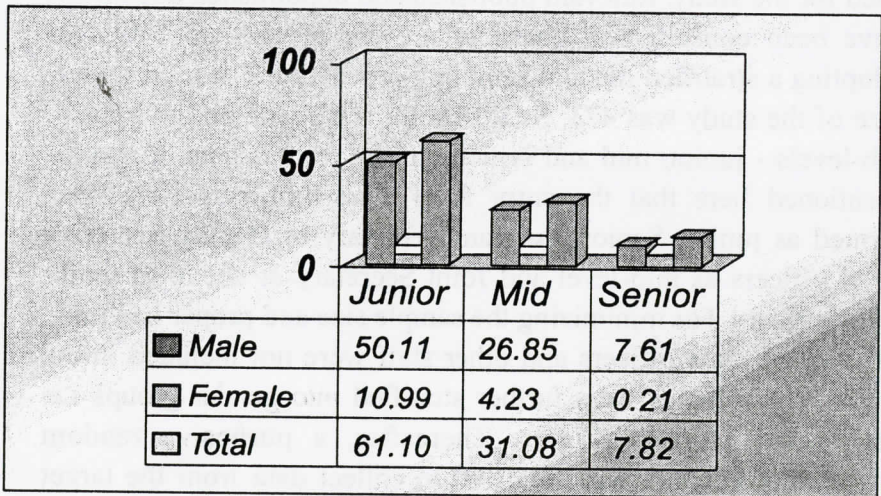
An empirical approach has been followed for conducting the study. Both the primary and secondary information and data have been used for the study. Relevant published and unpublished documents have been consulted. A questionnaire survey method was used adopting a stratified random sampling procedure. The total sample size of the study was 473. Stratification was made on the basis of job-levels - junior, mid and senior—of the respondents. It may be mentioned here that the entry level class-I officers have been termed as junior, Senior Assistant Secretary to Deputy Secretary level officers as mid-level and Joint Secretary & above as senior level officers. For minimizing the sample size and proper handling, the second class officers and other staff were not included in the study. The samples were further stratified into gender groups i.e. males and females (Fig-1). Thereafter, a purposive random sampling procedure was followed to collect data from the target group.

The study has used both simple and cross-tabulation for its analyses. Graphical representations like bar diagrams, conical graphs and other statistical techniques, such as corresponding weighing methods to responses with ranks were employed for analyzing and interpreting data. The analytical description has been made mostly according to the corresponding tables (but tables of primary data have not been presented here only to minimize the size of the paper) and statistical techniques and tests employed.

The process of weighing system of ranked responses was as follows :

Ranks of the Responses	Corresponding Assigned Weights
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5
6	6

Fig-1 : Sample Design : Stratified Clusters of Respondents (in %)



The sum of weighted value of each individual parameter was then calculated with the following formula :

$$S = \sum [(n1 \times 1), (n2 \times 2), (n3 \times 3), (n4 \times 4), (n5 \times 5), (n6 \times 6)]$$

... .. [Formula-1]

Where, S = Sum of weighted rank value of a certain parameter;

n = Number of responses;

n1 = Number of responses against certain parameter with rank 1;

n2 = Number of responses against certain parameter with rank 2;

n3 = Number of responses against certain parameter with rank 3;

n4 = Number of responses against certain parameter with rank 4;

n5 = Number of responses against certain parameter with rank 5;

n6 = Number of responses against certain parameter with rank 6;

and 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 are the corresponding weight values assigned for Rank 1, Rank 2, Rank 3, Rank 4, Rank 5 and Rank 6 respectively.

Finally, considering the weighted values (with highest rank) of all the responses for a particular parameter as hundred percent, percentage-wise weights/strengths of each parameter was calculated with the help of the following formula :

$$\text{Stn.} = \frac{S}{N \times r_n} \times 100 \quad \dots \dots \dots \text{[Formula-2]}$$

Where, Stn. = Strength or Degree (in %) of opinion of a certain parameter;

S = Sum of weighted rank value of a certain parameter;

N = Total number of responses against a certain parameter;

r_n = The highest possible rank value/weightage for a certain parameter;

It is important to note that the foregoing statistical procedures were performed to convert ordinal data into more quantifiable form so that the respondents' views on different gender issues can be depicted more effectively.

Spearman's Rank Correlation of Co-efficient i.e.

$$r_s = 1 - \frac{6 \sum d^2}{n^3 - n} \dots \dots \dots \text{[Formula-3].}$$

has been employed applying permutation-combination methods among the respondents of different levels for checking consistency of their views towards different gender issues to draw statistical inferences.

Here, r_s = Spearman's Rank Correlation of Co-efficient
 d = Differences in rank of paired values
 n = Number of pairs

Therefore, the hypothesis, where r_s is used would be as follows :

1. Null Hypothesis : There is no significant consistency amongst the views of the respondents of different job-levels or of different gender groups.
 (H_0)
2. Alternative Hypothesis (H_1) : There is a significant consistency amongst the views of the respondents of different job-levels or of different gender groups.

3.0 Analysis and Findings

The attitudes towards gender issues are to a great extent, determined by one's family, educational and religious backgrounds. Other socio-economic characteristics like economic, social association, employment status etc. may also play a vital role in shaping one's attitudes towards gender issues. For example, an educated woman is very much conscious about her reproductive health; fertility rate of employed women is generally low (Rahman, 1993, p. 14); an educated husband usually becomes more tolerant, sympathetic and empathetic to gender problems in general and to his wife's problems in particular. Education is functionally considered as the lever to bring about positive attitudinal changes towards gender issues (Mongella, 1995, p. 114). Illiteracy is a

major contributor to women's marginalization and low status in life. The gender gap is mostly pronounced in the poorer countries of the world because of their low literacy rate, especially low literacy rate amongst the females.

UNDP considers gender equality in all spheres of life as a pre-condition for sustainable human development. It suggests that the best way to achieve this is to decentralize decision-making and allow equal participation for both men and women in planning and implementing programmes that affect their life (UNDP, 1996, p. 27). Statistics shows that gender discrimination is prevalent everywhere - in family, community, society and nation. Women's socio-economic, political and legal status has changed very little throughout the history for the majority of the World's population. A World Bank study indicates that a woman's rights over major decisions about her children's future, place of residence, marriage, inheritance, employment and the like continued to remain insignificant in many parts of the world throughout most of human history (Afkhami, 1999, pp. 47-48). An interactive action research conducted recently in the USA reveals that men's over identification with work and occupation as a source of self-esteem feeds gender inequality just as the presumption that women alone are responsible for family (Bailyn, 2000, pp 167-179).

What Singh (1992, p.1) depicted "development is the best contraceptive" or "contraceptive is the best development" can be similarly explained by analyzing the relationships between "human development" and "attitudinal development towards gender issues". Human development acts like a "contraceptive" against gender discrimination. In other words, gender equity accelerates human development. It does not necessarily mean that the countries with high human development do not experience gender disparity. Of course they have it, but the extent and dimensions of the disparity are very different from the countries with medium and low human development [Table-1].

Table-1 : Comparative HRD & Gender Disparity Indices of Selected Countries

Country	HDI		GDI		GEM		HPI-1		HPI-2	
	Rank	Value	Rank	Value	Rank	Value	Rank	Value	Rank	Value
High Human Development										
Canada	1	0.935	1	0.932	8	0.739			11	11.8
Norway	2	0.934	2	0.932	1	0.825			1	7.3
United States	3	0.929	4	0.927	13	0.707			18	15.8
Australia	4	0.927	3	0.927	11	0.715			13	12.2
Medium Human Development										
Costa Rica	48	0.797	46	0.789	24	0.553	2	4.0		
Croatia	49	0.795	45	0.790	34	0.517			-	-
Trinidad & Tobago	50	0.793	48	0.784	22	0.583	5	5.1		
Dominica	51	0.793	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Low Human Development										
Bhutan	142	0.483	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Nepal	144	0.474	119	0.449	-	-	80	51.3		
Bangladesh	146	0.461	121	0.441	67	0.305	63	37.8		
Niger	173	0.293	143	0.280	70	0.119	85	64.7		

Source: UNDP : Human Development Report 2000. Oxford University Press, pp. 157-173

Note : HRD=Human Resource Development, HDI=Human Development Index, GDI=Gender-related Development Index, GEM=Gender Empowerment Measures, HPI=Human Poverty Index.

Although the HRD indices do not directly reflect the extent of attitudinal problems towards gender issues, Table-1 shows that the countries with high human development have achieved higher values of GDI and GEM and the countries with low human development achieved lower values of GDI and GEM. Higher attitudinal problems towards gender issues in the countries with low human development is one of the major causes of their lower values of GDI and GEM. Bangladesh is a country with low human development and persistently widespread gender discriminations, many of which lie deep into the value systems of the people and society.

3.1 Respondents' Gender Awareness

The respondents were asked whether they considered identified aspects (listed in the conceptual framework of the study) as gender issues. The study reveals that there were quite a large number of respondents (irrespective of male or female or job-levels i.e. junior, mid and senior) who do not consider those aspects as gender issues

and that irrespective of their job-levels and gender groups, there is a significant consistency in the responses given by the respondents [Fig-2]. This means that majority of them do not consider those as gender issues, although those are universally accepted gender issues. That's why there is an urgent need for undertaking a mass awareness and gender sensitization programmes and gender sensitivity should be the prime consideration in designing any gender training for them.

The study indicates that most of the respondents do not consider "discrimination on birth rights" (54.7%) and "discrimination on food & nutrition" (54.5%) as gender issues whereas the rests were identified as gender issues by most of the respondents. Affirmative attitudinal changes towards gender issues have a strong positive impact on women's access to assets and opportunities and such impact, as a result, help accelerate Women Human Resources Development (WHRD), which have been elaborately discussed below.

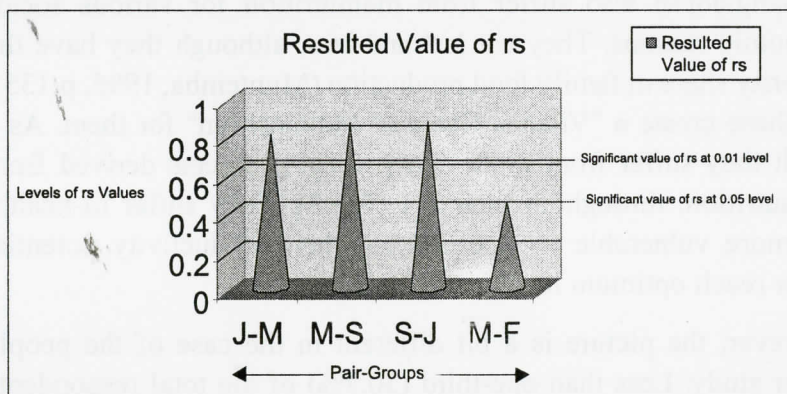


Fig-2 : Consistency of Responses amongst Different Levels & Genders

[J-M = Junior & Mid Levels, M-S = Mid & Senior Levels, S-J = Senior & Junior Levels, M-F = Males & Females]

3.2 Gender Relations of Productivity Systems

Women Human Resources Development (WHRD) is a factor that greatly affects Productivity Relations Systems (PRS). The gender related input factors of WHRD within PRS have been analysed here according to the broad categorization outlined earlier in the conceptual framework of the study.

3.2.1 Physiological Input Sub-Systems

3.2.1.1 Access to Food & Nutrition

Food is a biological need both for men and women. Although biologically, women need a bit of lesser calorie than men, they require additional care and calories during pregnancy and lactation, which are often ignored. Statistics shows that the girl children in Bangladesh suffer from consistent deprivation of nutrition. Girls under-5 and 5-14 years of age usually consume 16% and 11% less calories than those of the boys respectively (Rogers, 1995, p. 97). It is not only a condition prevalent among the young girls; women in Bangladesh also suffer from malnutrition for various socio-economic reasons. They eat last and less, although they have the majority share in family food production (Muntemba, 1995, p.135). All these create a "Vicious Cycle of Malnutrition" for them. As a result they suffer from multi-dimensional problems derived from malnutrition, throughout their life [Fig-3]. They suffer ill-health; are more vulnerable to diseases and their productivity potential never reach optimum level.

However, the picture is a bit different in the case of the people under study. Less than one-third (30.7%) of the total respondents think that males need more food for their hard work than females. 30.5% male and 31.5% female respondents cherish this attitude. The strengths of this attitude among males and females are 70% and 59.7% respectively. The people under study are the most educated and most privileged group in the society. Still, almost one-third of them have the attitude that acts as a strong barrier to women's physiological as well as mental development.

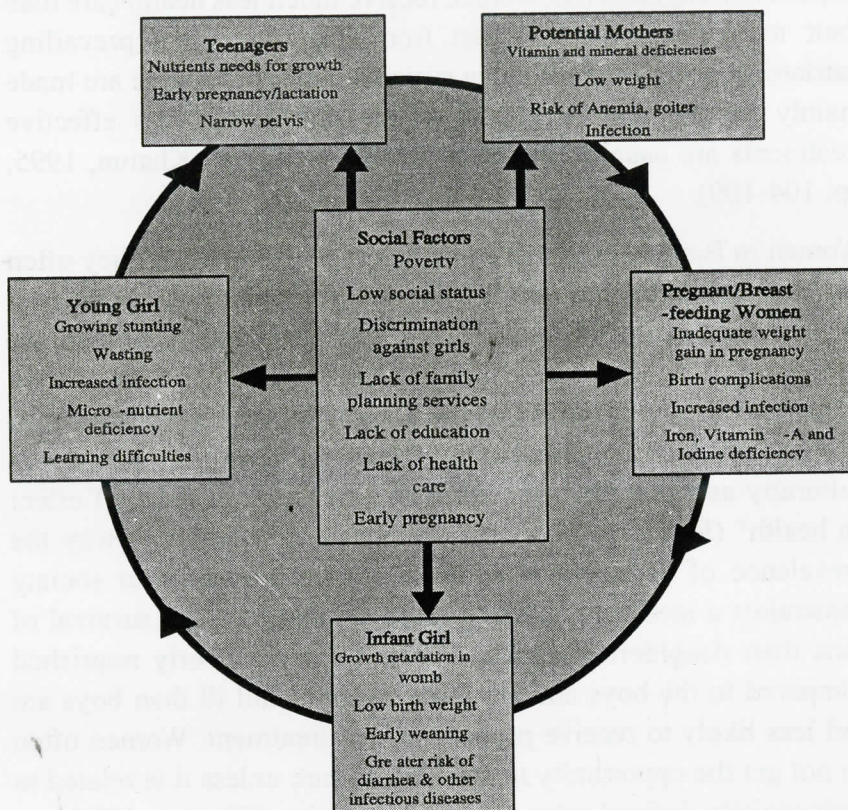


Fig-3 : The Vicious Cycle of Malnutrition
[Source : Modified from UNFPA, 1989]

Most of the female respondents mainly believe that it is not the gender but the nature of job that determines who needs good food. The respondents having gender preference do not really recognize women's contributions to the family and they still hold on to their social malpractices and superstitions. Their attitudinal changes may reverse the situation.

3.2.1.2 Access to Generic Health Care Facilities

Although there has been significant improvement in the health care sector the question remains how far those facilities have reached the women. Extending health care facilities to women does not only depend upon one's economic ability but also on attitudes of males.

Experience suggests that women receive much less health care than their male counterparts. Apart from this, under the prevailing patriarchal socio-cultural value systems, higher expenses are made mainly for the male members of the family and less effective treatments are usually offered to female members (Khatun, 1995, pp. 104-109).

Women in Bangladesh have a peculiar type of mind-set; they often put their children's and family's needs before their own, at the cost of their own health (Younis, 1994). The Bangladeshi women are compliant by nature; they willingly sacrifice a big portion of food in favour of male members of the household, which leads them to a silent cycle of malnutrition. "Since suffering in silence is culturally ascribed feminine attribute - so too is its spin-off effect on health" (Roger, 1995, p. 105, emphasis added). That's why the prevalence of ill health is endemic among women. Our society constraints a mother by placing more emphasis on the survival of sons than daughters (Gribble, 1993). Girls are poorly nourished compared to the boys and are more likely to fall ill than boys are and less likely to receive proper medical treatment. Women often do not get the opportunity to seek health care unless it is related to their socially defined roles of wife and mother (Khattab, 1994).

Most of the respondents, irrespective of gender and job-levels, feel that females are enjoying less health care facilities than males both at micro (family) and macro (national) levels. But most of them (66.8%), irrespective of gender and job-levels opined that they do not have any gender preference for providing health care facilities in their families. There were some respondents (9.3%), mainly male, who have strong gender preference for providing health care facilities. The main reasons behind such preference are :

- (a) Males are the nucleus of the economic activities of the family,
- (b) Male has to work harder than female,
- (c) It is the socio-cultural practices that male has to be provided more care and
- (d) Females have less power to do something for the family.

The above-mentioned opinions indicate that those respondents maintain a very old and traditional value systems in their family. And virtually this type of people works as a strong hindrance to bring about changes in gender situations.

3.2.1.3 Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Health

Reproductive rights and reproductive health is not a well-discussed issue in Bangladesh. Our socio-cultural tradition does not encourage and teach to discuss this topic openly in our society. Only in recent years, rich and middle class women in urban areas, especially in the capital city have echoed the concept of reproductive rights and reproductive health (Akhter, 1994, p. 46). Reproductive health status of a society is determined largely by its socio-economic condition. Lack of gender-specific optimal nutrition, access to safe water and sanitation, lower status of women and environmental hazards has negative effects on reproductive health of the society. An individual's life style or behaviour, more importantly, sexual behaviour is another important determinant. The availability, use and efficiency of health care services are also important determinants of reproductive health. The present study has not considered the technical aspect but has focused on the attitudinal issues of reproductive rights and reproductive health situation in Bangladesh.

Fertility in Bangladesh appears to have declined substantially over the last 2-3 decades. This might have been achieved by higher contraceptive prevalence rate in the country. Very little is known about the status of infertility and facilities for diagnosis and treatment of infertility. The information on sexual health is also too scanty to warrant any meaningful interpretation. The risk of maternal mortality is 150 times greater than developed countries (Akhter, Halida, 1994, p. 9). The health situation of children in Bangladesh is also in general very poor.

The idea of reproductive rights is very new in Bangladesh. Common understanding of this right is that women should decide and control their own bodies and reproductive behaviour.

Reproductive rights premises the assertion of individual rights of women over her reproductive power. Women often sensationalize the issue by extending the concept to include whole of female physiology. This excludes the question of political emancipation of women. The term "reproductive rights" does not imply the same meaning to women in Bangladesh as it does to women in the Western societies.

The lives of women in Bangladesh are dictated by family, community, society and nation. Even the aid-giving agencies play vital roles in dictating over women's reproductive rights and behaviour. Population control has been a declared government policy since sixties and various donor agencies have conditionalities on women's reproductive rights. Therefore, "the reproductive right" in Bangladesh is clearly a disguise of the population controllers. Even in personal or family level, the attitudes towards reproductive rights are such that when a woman gets married, she is supposed to surrender her body under the control of her husband (Jahan, Roushan, p. 86).

3.2.2 Social Input Sub-Systems

3.2.2.1 Access to Education

Despite Constitutional guarantee for equal access to education and several interventions made and attractive incentive packages offered by the Government and NGOs, gender disparity prevails at all levels of formal education (Hussain, 1995, p. 91). The study reveals that education is a weapon in a girl's hand with which she can work, make money if she wishes, can help her husband with the family's livelihood, can teach and take care of thier children better and can make a good match and marry someone educated who can make a lady out of her (Mongella, 1995, p. 117). Although the girls' enrolment at primary and secondary levels has encouragingly increased over the last two decades, their dropout rate is alarmingly high. Most of the parents of rural areas and urban poor families prefer to educate male rather than female children. Because of religious superstition and many other socio-cultural practices, most

of them do not like their female children to have education. They fear that their girls will gain a sense of freedom through education, which is dangerous for her, for the society and the family. A study on female education as perceived by "social class" and "gender" depicted that the educational needs for females is perceived more extensively by females than the males and the higher the social class structures, the greater the interests in female education (Duza, 1993, pp. 33-37).

The present study also finds the same scenario about the gender discrimination towards access to education. Most of the respondents (84.1%) strongly believe that there should be equal access to education irrespective of gender. But there are very few respondents (8%), irrespective of genders at junior and senior levels, who do not believe in such access. Again, most of the respondents (65.1%) do not like to have any preference for male in getting higher education. This attitude is highly prevalent among the female respondents (90.4%). Among the respondents (17.8%), who prefer males for higher education are mainly males.

The views given in favour of male education are mainly superstitious, psychological, social and economical in nature whereas the ones in favour of the females are mostly rational and legal. The study indicates that the respondents are more inclined to provide house-tutoring facilities to their female children. Less than fifty per cent (41.5%) of the male and about two-thirds (64.4%) of the female respondents think that females are doing well in education than their male counterparts. Comparatively, the junior level male respondents, who believe in such performance of the females are less in number. Both the categories of respondents i.e. the respondents who believe and those who do not believe in females' better performance have strong arguments in favour of their views. Those are as follows:

Some of the respondents believe that it is not the gender but the merit that determines performance in education. Some male respondents (14.8%) comprised of junior and senior level government officials

provided special support for education to their male children rather than female children. They opined that male baby would have to face more challenges in real life than female baby; that's why they should be given such preference. But some of the respondents opined that females needed special support in respect of transport, accommodation and security because of the country's existing socio-cultural and law & order situation.

Arguments in Favour of Males	Arguments in Favour of Females
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Girls are discouraged in education because of religious beliefs. ● Males are sincere about education. ● Males are innovative. ● Males are more intelligent. ● Males have the requisite capability. Environment is not in favour of the girls. Girls have less diversity of life in the society. ● Some of the females are doing well but their percentage is very low in comparison to males. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Females are careful, studious and disciplined. ● Females can concentrate more than their male counterparts. ● Females are more sincere, obedient, serious, responsible, self-guided, punctual and attentive. ● Females are more result-oriented and they are patient. ● The latest records of different Board of Education prove that females are doing well. ● Females are quiet than males. ● Females spend more time for education while the males are involved in activities outside home and politics; they may have bad companies. ● Females get slight preferential treatments from male teachers.

The senior level government officials strongly believe that because of their steadiness, devotion, attentiveness, sincerity, patience, discipline etc. females can do well in some special areas of education like teaching, medicine, computer science, honours based university education, nursing, home economics, social science/welfare, art/culture/music etc. But about half of the junior and mid level respondents, irrespective of gender, do not agree to the fact that women can do well in some special areas of education.

Both the male and female respondents agreed to the fact that males are more meritorious and intelligent than females; and females have more learning power, patience and discipline than males. The male respondents have been found attitudinally more responsive

and liberal to their female counterparts. The female respondents think that they have more potential than males.

3.2.2.2 Access to Employment Opportunities

Despite the Constitutional guarantee of equal access to employment opportunities for women, special quota system, NGOs' and Government agencies' preference for female candidates in many jobs, they are not quite proportionately visible all over the job market. In the present study, most of the respondents believe that there should not be any preference for males in access to employment opportunities (50.0%) and females also should not be given any special privilege (42.7%). They believe that access to employment opportunities should be on the basis of merit (68.9%). They strongly believe that there should be an equal access to employment opportunities (58.7%); males are not suitable for some special areas of employment (62.0%) and same is the case for females (68.9%). The respondents also believe that females should be recommended as suitable for some special areas of employment (62.8%). The most important areas of employment as identified by the respondents suitable for females are physician (72.7%), teacher (57.9%), nurse (38.9%), day care services (30.2%), secretarial jobs (26.4%), computer personnel (17.8%), telephone operator (16.9%), banker (12%), researcher (4.2%) and administrator (4%). Interestingly most of the female respondents do also agree with such identification.

Some of the respondents have indicated their gender preferences in access to employment opportunities. The respondents who prefer males think that since gradually they are to shoulder the family burdens. Women's massive entry into job market would make the unemployment problems more acute. They do not like to understand that job competition helps to diversify job opportunities and thus strengthen the overall job market. On the other hand, females have been preferred by some respondents for diminishing existing gender disparity and because of their backward position in the society.

3.2.2.3 Gender Values in Working Environment

Women has risen above the age-old socio-cultural traditions by taking up professional roles. In doing so, sometimes they enjoy a very congenial atmosphere and at times they face multi-dimensional problems and difficulties in their working environment. A recent study on government officials indicates that the female colleagues are quite confident to control their subordinates. Their volume and quality of work are quite satisfactory (Haque, 1988, pp. 70 and 110). At the same time, there are examples that male bosses often consider them as women first, and as workers later. The efficiency of working women is always suspected; co-workers in the office cannot mentally accept the superiority of a woman; their subordinate males do not like their authority over them (Maitra-Sinha, 1993, p. 42). Sex-specific job differentiation exists as a social value with the result that women are denied entry into many occupations (Jahan, 1991, p. 10). As a result the number of women employed in the professional and technical jobs remain low. Working women are also often sexually harassed and exploited by their male bosses. Another study indicates that comparatively easy and light tasks in terms of physical effort, less travelling and less risky tasks are usually offered to them (Haque, 1988, p. 54).

The present study has identified as many as 26 parameters¹ to analyse the views of the respondents about the capacity of men and women in working environment. According to their views both males and females have a certain standard capacity to perform their duties in the job-situation. But males have been viewed as more capable in workplace in terms of their organizing and leadership capacity, control, coordination, decision making, guidance, motivation, supervision, communication, financial management, professional skills, quality and speed of works, capacity of expression, punctuality, responsibility, accountability, power of judgement, personality, cooperation, awareness and team works

1. The 26 parameters are : Organizing Capacity, Leadership Capacity, Control, Co-ordination, Decision-Making, Guiding Capacity, Motivation, Supervision, Communication, Financial Management, Professional Skill, Quality of Work, Speed of Work, Speed of Work, Capacity of Expression, Sincerity, Punctuality, Honesty, Responsibility, Accountability, Discipline, Power of Judgement, Personality, Co-operation, Dependability, Awareness and Team Work.

whereas women have been viewed as more honest, disciplined and dependable. The study also found significant consistency among the views of different gender and job groups.

3.2.2.4 Participation in the Nation Building Activities

Women had little scope to escape from the "men's world" saturated by male dominated ideologies throughout the ages. Their capabilities were not recognized and their potential were ignored. Only in recent times there has been a growing awareness among people of different societies about the dysfunctional implication of the underlying injustice and gender based inequity whereby the nation, especially the women themselves have perpetually suffered. The patriarchal socio-cultural value systems of fundamentalists and neo-fundamentalists often put strong left-hooks on their promising ways (Guhathakurta, 1995, p. 41).

The respondents, irrespective of gender and job-levels opined that participation of women in selected nation building activities such as economic activities, business and commercial activities, cultural activities etc. is much lower than those of males. Participation of women in business and commercial activities is very low. The study indicates that there is a persistent gender disparity in the society against greater participation of women in development and nation building activities. Women are also not, at this moment, confident enough to overcome the situation. Therefore, the country needs to develop and adopt a strategic plan to bring about extensive changes in the existing attitudes of the society as a whole and ensure greater participation of women in this area.

3.2.2.5 Political Participation

The GEM index developed by UNDP to analyze the political participation of women in a society indicates that Bangladesh has achieved higher rate of women's participation in politics compared to many other countries in the developing world with similar socio-economic and cultural background (UNDP, 2000, pp. 172-173). Although Bangladesh Constitution has granted equal status to

women and equality of rights to them, including rights to vote and rights to take active part in politics, political participation of women is merely concentrated into casting their votes in elections. Active participation of women in politics is limited within politically powerful families (Maitra-Sinha, 1993, p. 178). The women voters often feel and opine that since women are by and large more "sincere, hard working, straight-forward, practical and principled" than men, they will be an asset in legislative bodies. They will be able to work harder for gender issues and for the upliftment of the status of women. But nobody is really spontaneously coming up from the grass-root levels, who may represent the voice of the womenfolk.

Since the nineties there has been a shift in development thinking towards women's political participation and decision-making in the community. An increased demand has been put forward for radical restructuring of policy and political structures. Bangladesh has made formal commitments to women's political participation in several important international strategy documents including the Plan of Action (Mexico 1975), the Forward Looking Strategies (Nairobi 1985) and the Beijing Plan of Action (1995). Bangladesh's ratification of UNCEDAW obligates it to creating the opportunities for women's participation in public decision-making. Provision of direct participation of women under reserved seats in UP election has made ways for their visibility in public life at grass-root levels. But women in Bangladesh "*.... have remained outside the play of power politics. Their visibility in popular struggles for democracy, in election campaigns and in community work has not been translated into greater influence in the public domain. Only a small number have been able to enter positions of public decision-making. Their dependence upon traditionally powerful structures within the national political structures has limited their role as cheerleaders. ...*" (Hossain, 1999, p. 178, emphasis added).

The respondents have been found very liberal to their female counterparts in general about their participation in politics. But they have been found highly conservative in allowing their own family

members to participate in political activities. There is a silently growing fear among people about power politics and political processes and activities. Women may not find themselves fit or comfortable there. Terrorism and foul play in politics might have contributed a lot to develop such fear among them. In the present context, the nation should adopt a strategic plan to bring them into politics through a comparatively safer ways like UP election system, where women have provision of some reserved seats to contest.

3.2.2.6 Freedom of Decision Making

Several studies indicate that compared to women, men enjoy much more freedom in decision making in all spheres of life. The male respondents have been found very conservative to allow females to choose their life partners. Their level of confidence on decisions of their junior female members of the family is very low. On the other hand, female respondents have been found very much dependent on males and they allow much more freedom to males than those of their female members. The males have also been found enjoying much more freedom in decision-making in their job-situations than those of their female counterparts. Even the female respondents find more confidence on male's decisions than those of the females. The persistent discriminatory gender values have developed such attitudes among them.

3.2.2.7 Gender Values Towards Generation Flow

In the existing socio-cultural value system, the male children of the family is assumed to maintain generation flow. Female children are considered as temporary guests at their parents' house until they get married. Their generation status is by and large merged with those of their husbands' families. In reality, this is the socially valued and culturally tuned generation flow system in our society, where women have virtually no room for maintaining generation flow of their own.

Most of the respondents at junior (70%) and mid (78.9%) levels do not have any gender preference for maintaining their generation flow and have the idea that both the genders can play this role. Although, mother's name is now being used along with the father's name for several social purposes, the views given above by the junior and mid level Government officials seem to be more rational rather than practical. Interestingly, none of the female respondents at any level preferred female children to maintain their generation flow. The senior level respondents rigidly preferred male children for their generation flow. Only a very few respondents at junior (4.2%) and mid (1.4%) levels preferred female children for their generation flow.

From the above observations, one may conclude that it's a very sensitive area, where the society as a whole may not yet be ready to compromise socially accepted gender preference. This needs a total restructuring of the society, which still remains a far cry and is going to take a long time.

3.2.3 Regulatory Input Sub-Systems

3.2.3.1 Birth Rights

Concerns for gender equity is getting stronger day by day in Bangladesh. Awareness about the issue has been increasing in the society. People, especially those who are well educated, have at least realized that it is no longer acceptable to say openly- "I prefer male rather than female baby". The study reveals that most of the respondents (43.6%) like to have male baby in case of one child [Table-5]. But when they were asked to say whether they prefer male rather than female baby, most of them simply avoided the question by responding as "no" (51.6%) or "indifferent" (31.5%). That means, they still prefer male baby- it is their basic attitude that has encircled their life patterns, values and behaviour. But they do not like to say it directly. This attitudinal trend seems to be very prominent amongst junior and mid level respondents. Another study indicates that gender preferences exist among the government servants and the elderly people in their family

(Fyzennessa, 1994, p. 67). There are evidence that in some cases wives are even forced or pressurized to take babies one after another until they can give birth to a male baby. Most of the senior level government officials (78.4%) directly opined that they prefer male rather than female baby. About 17.8% of the female respondents also belong to this category. The reasons given by the respondents for such preference are mainly the followings :

- (a) males maintain the generation flow and uphold the family status,
- (b) they take care of their parents during old age, (c) they usually shoulder the family burden, (d) they can provide social security to their parents and family and (e) they can freely move outside home.

The respondents who do not have such preferences opined that :(a) females can also help their parents if they are brought up properly, (b) there is no guarantee that males will take care of their parents during old age, (c) both the males and females can contribute to the nation, (d) female baby helps her mother in keeping the house neat and clean and (e) both are equal in all sphere of life.

By looking into the opinions of the respondents one can easily come to a conclusion that although generation flow is termed as a psychological issue, the main reasons behind gender preferences are very much social and economic. If females in our society were properly brought up, empowered and they could provide better social and economic security to their parents and families, the scenario of gender preference would have been quite reverse.

3.2.3.2 Heredity of Rights on Property

Basically, our religious laws determine the heredity on rights to property. The property rights to Hindu women in Bengal were limited to dowry (Stridhan). A widow without children had a right to income from the property of her deceased husband during her lifetime. Young widows, specially, those without male children were seen as unwanted burden on the family. Although dowry system is considered to be an evil practice and the Dowry Prohibition Act was promulgated to curb the situation, the inhuman

practice of dowry continues unabated (Maitra-Sinha, 1993, pp. 11-16). Theoretically, Muslim women have greater property rights, since Muslim law specifies that daughters should inherit one-half of the son's shares (Southard, 1996, p. 45). But in practice, they also suffer from almost same sort of deprivations due to patriarchal attitudes of the society. So long this attitude would prevail, the problems would remain at the same magnitude.

Most of the respondents (77.4%) opined that the existing legal provision of property shares for males and females is quite all right. About 92.8% of the male respondents at junior level agree to the prevailing property share system. It is mentionable that a considerable proportion of female respondents at middle (50%) and senior (100%) levels (who are supposed to have more experiences and realizations about life) also agree to the existing system. They opine that females get property shares from their parents as well as from their husbands, so the existing property share system is quite okay. But the others (only 22.6% of the total respondents), believe that :

- ♦ Since all the children, irrespective of gender are equal to their parents, property should be distributed equally.
- ♦ Since females take more care of their parents and they are still weak in every stage of life, they need more property.

3.2.3.3 Privilege & Empowerment

UNDP argued that there is no correlation between income level and gender disparity in a society. This means that elimination of gender disparity and ensuring women's empowerment do not necessarily depend upon high income. According to the Human Development Report 2000 of UNDP, Norway stands top in women's empowerment [see Table-1], whereas there are many other countries of the world whose income level is much higher. It has been observed that gender empowerment situation of many developing countries is much better than those of many rich and developed countries (Rahman, 1998, p. 11). This indicates that gender empowerment can be achieved/ensured even with low-

income level. GEM picture in Bangladesh is much more positive than those of many other developing nations of the world with similar socio-cultural characteristics.

In fact, women's empowerment is a concept that includes a package programme consisting of different socio-cultural, economic, political and legal issues. As an enthusiastic signatory to both NFS (Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies) and CEDAW and having conflicting socio-cultural matrix, Bangladesh is planning to undertake the crucial approaches and broad-based principles, where women would not be perceived as passive beneficiaries of economic growth and socio-political development but as key players and participants in their own rights. Importance is given to mobilize women as a political force and increase their participation in decision-making process at all levels of society, in the family, community and nation (Choudhury, 1995, pp. 2-4).

Considering DWAN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era) approach of political empowerment in Bangladesh context the present study has emphasized not only on narrow institutional matters but also on (a) women's position for entry into different power-bases of the society and into decision-making processes, and on (b) grassroots movement and conscientization. The grassroots movement and conscientization programmes of different NGOs have emerged as able tools for women's political empowerment, where other issues of women's empowerment like health and family planning, rural credit and income generation, education, advocacy, skill development training and conscientization etc. have been incorporated. Women in both rural and urban settings have been increasingly taking up new challenges and accepting non-traditional professions very often (Huq, 1995, pp. 62-65).

Although a considerable improvement has taken place in women's legal position in the society, women in Bangladesh, as elsewhere, are commonly depicted as subjugated and subordinated in the patriarchally dominated society. The image of subordination is aggravated and amplified by the traditional views of stereotype

female roles in the family and society. The main factors contributing to this subordination are the negative impact of tradition, religion, patriarchy, seclusion and paternalistic attitudes in the socio-economic and legal spheres. In fact, women in Bangladesh do not really want to have their rights like women in Western or developed world. They have their own conceptual framework of freedom and rights, which they perceive can ensure their peaceful, dependable and trust-worthy life in the society.

Almost all the respondents believe that males are physically stronger than females. Even all the female respondents have the same kind of belief. In fact, discrimination in entitlements, power and authority originates from this type of attitude. According to the respondents, illiteracy, socio-cultural values, poverty, religious belief and feelings etc. are the most important causes of women's backwardness in the society. Most of the respondents (81.4%) support women's empowerment in the perspective of women's backwardness. Increased privilege for women's education, controlling population growth, reduction of poverty, enlightening people through proper religious knowledge, enrichment of socio-cultural values, development of decision making power etc. were rated very high as the areas in favour of women's empowerment.

4.0 The New Systems Approach to Design Gender-Training

Since the Government officials at all levels, specially the males, maintain negative attitude towards different gender issues, they should undergo intensive "counselling & motivational exercise training" involving gender sensitivity issues for their conscientization and affirmative attitudinal changes. This study suggests the following three strategic systems approaches for designing gender-training for them :

- (a) Many Government officials maintain negative attitudes towards some specific aspects of gender issues. Training curriculum incorporating such gender issues should be designed in such a way that they become fully gender-sensitised and act appropriately.

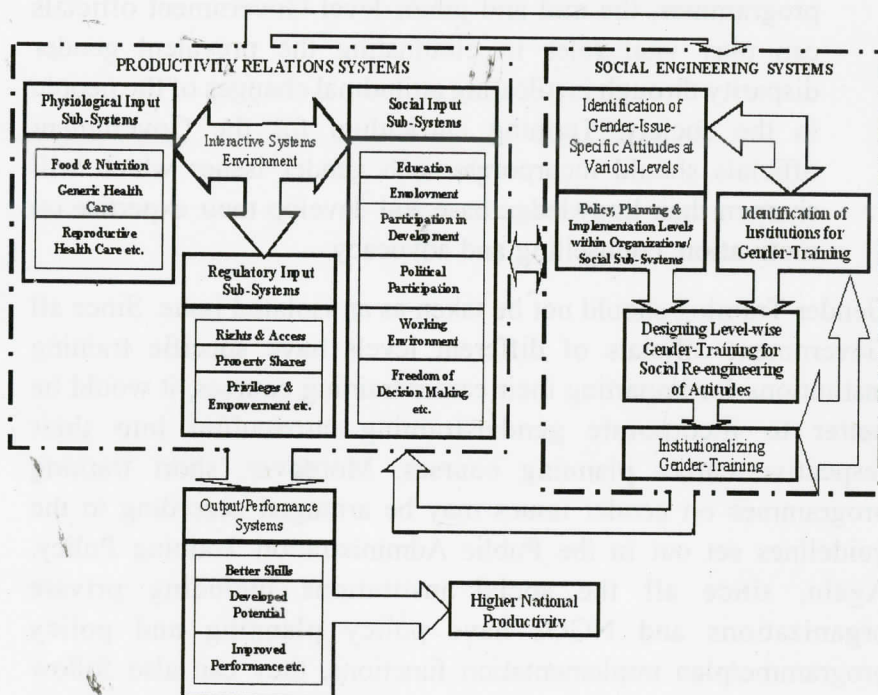
- (b) Some gender issues need to be addressed at policy levels. The Government officials associated with policy making processes should undergo such intensive "counselling & motivational exercise training" that brings about gender-friendly attitudinal changes among them and they adopt them while framing and formulating policies.
- (c) As implementers of the Government policies, plans and programmes, the mid and junior level Government officials can play vital roles in eliminating the prevalent gender disparity through inculcating attitudinal changes of the people in the society. Training curriculum for the Government officials should incorporate such gender issues which will sharpen their knowledge base and develop their expertise on motivation, counselling and advocacy.

Gender-Training should not be taken as an isolated issue. Since all Government officials of different levels have specific training institutions for imparting their career training courses, it would be better to incorporate gender-training curriculum into their respective career planning courses. Moreover, short training programmes on gender issues may be arranged according to the guidelines set out in the Public Administration Training Policy. Again, since all the social institutions including private organizations and NGOs have policy planning and policy programme/plan implementation functions, they can also follow the same strategic systems approaches to design gender-training for their own target groups.

The proposed systems approach is to be called "Social Re-engineering of Gender Values". It outlines both the linear and composite functions of three basic systems i.e. (a) Social Engineering Systems (SES), (b) Productivity Relations Systems (PRS) and (c) Performance Systems. PRS and SES are interactive in nature. The total PRS work within an interactive systems environment of physiological, social and regulatory input sub-systems [Fig.4]. Attitudes of the people concerned act as the driving force in regulating both the individual productivity

functions among and within different input sub-systems and the PRS as a whole. Each of the individual productivity functions has matched gender perspectives. Therefore, social re-engineering of attitudes of the people concerned towards different gender issues would eventually demolish the existing barriers creating dysfunctional impacts on PRS, on its input sub-systems and

Fig -4 : The Proposed Systems Approach to Design Gender-Training



individual productivity functions and increase productivity performance by creating women's opportunities for acquiring better skills, enhancing potential to be gained through having indiscriminate access to services, assets and opportunities; thus their roles in development would be reversed and the resultant performance would help achieve higher NP.

4.1 Suggested Supportive Policy Measures

The implementation of the designed systems approach would get a further momentum, if the following interventions are undertaken simultaneously :

- A mass awareness programme amongst the Government officials for better understanding the gender issues and its multifarious effects in the society and the nation needs to be undertaken urgently.
- Education should be regarded as the basic tool of full promotion and improvement of women's status.
- Motivational activities, counselling and advocacy towards promising future of women's education in contributing to the country's economic emancipation, human and national development should be adopted as basic strategies to eradicate gender discrimination.
- The problems of reproductive health should be given more emphasis in the national strategic plan of actions. Reproductive health should be included in curriculum of both in formal and non-formal education systems in the country for changing the existing social value systems.
- Nutritional education should be incorporated both in formal and informal education systems in the country. A mass movement is required to reshape the nutritional status of women through motivation and counselling.
- Women's empowerment through their mass participation in socio-economic development activities and in decision making processes should be ensured adopting a national strategic plan and an effective legal framework should be developed for enabling them to minimize the existing gender disparities.
- Gender discrimination in providing health care services should be socially and legally treated as a punishable

offence. More care for women should be ensured free of cost during pregnancy and lactation.

- In the given circumstances, special preference should be given to women in some specific areas of employment opportunities like medical treatment, teaching, nursing, day care services, secretarial jobs, computer including IT, telephone operating, banking etc. They should also be given appropriate opportunities to develop themselves along such lines.
- Women should be encouraged to shoulder more responsibilities in the working environment. Such engagement will increase and improve their capabilities.
- The problems of reproductive rights should be handled at personal and family levels, until the government changes its population policy. Extensive motivation, conscientization, advocacy and counselling can be very effective to this end.
- Working women need to be provided with more security in working place. More protection measures should be ensured against any kind of harassment.
- In the country's present context, the nation should adopt a strategic plan to bring women into national and other level politics through a comparatively safer ways like UP (Union Parishad) election system, where women have provision of some reserved seats to contest.

5.0 Conclusion

Gender issues have socio-economic, cultural and political connotations. Therefore, these should be handled socially, economically, culturally, legally and politically. As a key social change agent, the Government officials can play vital roles in actualizing gender parity, equity and equality. In playing such roles they should undergo such gender training designed maintaining aforesaid and the following three strategic systems approaches.

First, the attitudes of the Government officials themselves that regulate their life style, need to be changed to some specific aspects of gender issues. Secondly, their attitudes towards formulating policies, plans and programmes need to be gender friendly. Third, the problems mostly lie in the grass root levels, where lack of education is very high; religious superstitions are still deep-rooted in every pore of the society; cultural believes have been integrated into life styles and poverty has stricken the doorsteps of people. Thus, there is a need for undertaking effective motivation and conscientization strategies by owning the problems at all levels, in the family, community, society and nation. The Government officials of different levels should undergo such training so that they can understand all these problems appropriately and take gender-friendly steps towards various gender issues. This would in turn help develop women as productive forces by reversing their roles in development and as a result, higher national productivity would be achieved.

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