Transparency and Accountability for Ensuring Food Security in Bangladesh: A Study on Field Institutions

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Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Acronyms and Abbreviation</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 Introduction</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Background Statement</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Objectives of the Study</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Conceptual Framework of the Study</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Methodology of the Study</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 An Overview of the Sampled Upazilas</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Limitations of the Study</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 Organization of the Report</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2 State of Food Insecurity: Global and Bangladesh Perspective</strong></td>
<td><strong>29</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Food Insecurity: A Global Perspective</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Food Insecurity in Bangladesh: Status and Current Trends</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3 Managing Food Security at Local Level: An Overview of the Role of Field Administration</strong></td>
<td><strong>37</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Constitutional Provisions for Local Government Administration</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Existing Structure of Local Administration in Bangladesh</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Rural Local Government Bodies</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Management of SSN Programs</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4 Social Safety Nets: Contents and Context</strong></td>
<td><strong>59</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Social Safety Nets: An Overview of VGD, VGF and FFW</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 People, Institution and Society: A Socio-Cultural Mapping</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 People’s Contact with Local Administration</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5 Major Findings</strong></td>
<td><strong>89</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 The Governance Aspect</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 The Program Aspect</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 The Political Aspect</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 The Socio-Cultural Aspect</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6 Policy Recommendations</strong></td>
<td><strong>117</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Governance-specific Recommendations</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Program-specific Recommendations</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7 Conclusion</strong></td>
<td><strong>123</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annexure I Questionnaire of the Research Project</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annexure 2 Distribution of Wheat/Rice for VGD Program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annexure 3 Distribution of Pusti Atta for VGD Program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annexure IV Composition of District VGD Committee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annexure V Composition of Upazila VGD Committee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AO</td>
<td>Allocation Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARISE</td>
<td>Appropriate Resources for Improving Street Children’s Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBS</td>
<td>Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIMSTEC</td>
<td>Bay of Bengal Initiative for MultiSectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRAC</td>
<td>Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRDB</td>
<td>Bangladesh Rural Development Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBN</td>
<td>Cost of Basic Need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPD</td>
<td>Centre for Policy Dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFW</td>
<td>Cash for Work, also called KABITA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DC</td>
<td>Deputy Commissioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCI</td>
<td>Direct Calorie Intake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DO</td>
<td>Delivery Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRR</td>
<td>Department of Relief and Rehabilitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRRO</td>
<td>District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DWA</td>
<td>Department of Women Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFW</td>
<td>Food for Work, also called KABIKHA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSSP</td>
<td>Female Secondary School Assistance Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GO</td>
<td>Grant Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GoB</td>
<td>Government of Bangladesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GR</td>
<td>Grant schemes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HES</td>
<td>Household Expenditure Surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IGVGD</td>
<td>Income Generation of Vulnerable Group Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KABIKHA</td>
<td>Kajer Binimoye Khaddya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KABITA</td>
<td>Kajer Binimoye Taka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MWCA</td>
<td>Ministry of Women and Children Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non Governmental Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPEC</td>
<td>Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries</td>
</tr>
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<td>OREC</td>
<td>Organization of the Rice Exporting Countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDBF</td>
<td>Palli Daridra Bimochon Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFDS</td>
<td>Public Food Distribution System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEM</td>
<td>Protein-Energy-Malnutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEP</td>
<td>Primary Education Stipend Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIC</td>
<td>Project Implementation Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIO</td>
<td>Project Implementation Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDRS</td>
<td>Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIMP</td>
<td>Rural Infrastructure Maintenance Program</td>
</tr>
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<td>RMP</td>
<td>Rural Maintenance Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMC</td>
<td>Rural Mothers Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSS</td>
<td>Rural Social Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAARC</td>
<td>South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDW</td>
<td>Socially Disadvantaged Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIFAD</td>
<td>Strengthening Institutions for Food Assisted Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SME</td>
<td>Small and Medium Term Enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPFS</td>
<td>Special Program on Food Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSC</td>
<td>Secondary School Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSN</td>
<td>Social Safety Net</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TR</td>
<td>Test Relief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAEO</td>
<td>Upazila Agriculture Extension Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAO</td>
<td>Upazila Agriculture Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCD</td>
<td>Urban Community Development Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCO</td>
<td>Upazila Cooperatives Officer</td>
</tr>
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<td>UEO</td>
<td>Upazila Education Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>UFC</td>
<td>Upazila Food Controller</td>
</tr>
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<td>UFO</td>
<td>Upazila Fisheries Officer</td>
</tr>
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<td>UNO</td>
<td>Upazila Nirbahi Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>UP</td>
<td>Union Parishad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URIR&amp;MC</td>
<td>Upazila Rural Infrastructure, Reconstruction and Maintenance Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USO</td>
<td>Upazila Statistics Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UUSC</td>
<td>Upazila Unnayan Samannay Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UWAO</td>
<td>Upazila Women Affairs Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V-Aid</td>
<td>Village-Aid Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VDP</td>
<td>Village Defence Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VGD</td>
<td>Vulnerable Group Development</td>
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<td>VGF</td>
<td>Vulnerable Group Feeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WFP</td>
<td>World Food Programme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Glossary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atta</td>
<td>Wheaten flour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aman</td>
<td>Rice grown in the monsoon season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhushi</td>
<td>Cattle Feed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boro</td>
<td>Rice grown in the dry season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaukidar</td>
<td>Village Police</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dafadar</td>
<td>Messenger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farias</td>
<td>Middlemen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gram Sarkar</td>
<td>Village government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jatiya Sangsad</td>
<td>Parliament of Bangladesh</td>
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<tr>
<td>KABIKHA</td>
<td>Kajer Binimoye Khaddya (Food for Work)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KABITA</td>
<td>Kajer Binimoye Taka (Cash for Work)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kg</td>
<td>Kilogram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madbor</td>
<td>Headman at rural area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madrasah</td>
<td>Traditional Islamic School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahajans</td>
<td>Money lenders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monga</td>
<td>Monga is seasonal food insecurity in ecologically vulnerable and economically weak parts of north-western Bangladesh, primarily caused by an employment and income deficit before <em>aman</em> is harvested. It mainly affects those rural poor, who have an undiversified income that is directly or indirectly based on agriculture (Defined by Sebastian Zug).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nakshi Kantha</td>
<td>A kind of embroidered quilts, bedspreads, wall hangings, and pillow shams made by artists in rural Bangladesh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panchayet</td>
<td>An Old Local Government Institution which implies an assembly of five or more persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pargana</td>
<td>Subdivision of a District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pourashava</td>
<td>An Urban Local Government Tier known as Municipalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pucca Road</td>
<td>Constructed Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pusti Atta</td>
<td>Fortified Wheaten Flour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shamunnay</td>
<td>A Research Organization in Bangladesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarder</td>
<td>Rural Local Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarker</td>
<td>Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thana</td>
<td>Literally police station (a tier of administration above union)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union</td>
<td>A rural area consisting of some villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upazila</td>
<td>Sub-district; was renamed as Upazila during the Ershad era</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upazila Nirbahi</td>
<td>A civil servant deputed by the government to the Upazila Parishad as Chief Officer; now called Upazila Nirbahi Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zamindar</td>
<td>Landlord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zila</td>
<td>District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zila Karnadhar</td>
<td>Committee of the district level that shoulders main responsibility of FFW projects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Committee in the Upazilas
List of Tables

Table 1.1: Basic Information of Patgram Upazila
Table 1.2: Basic Information of Singair Upazila
Table 1.3: Basic Information of Fulchhari Upazila
Table 1.4: Basic Information of Shibchar Upazila
Table 1.5: Profile of Sampled Upazilas
Table 1.6: Category of Respondents of the Study
Table 2.1: Prevalence of Undernourishment in Bangladesh
Table 2.2: Poverty Situation in Bangladesh Measured by the Cost of Basic Need Method
Table 4.1: Age Limit of the Beneficiaries of Four Upazilas
Table 4.2: Level of Education of the Beneficiaries of Four Upazilas
Table 4.3: Level of Monthly Income of the Beneficiaries of Four Upazilas
Table 4.4: Level of Education of the UP Chairmen of Four Upazilas
Table 4.5: Level of Monthly Income of the UP Chairmen of Four Upazilas
Table 4.6: Level of Monthly Income of the UP Members of Four Upazilas
Table 4.7: Level of Education of the UP Members of Four Upazilas
Table 4.8: Profession-wise Number of Civil Society Members of Four Upazilas
Table 4.9: Income Level of the Civil Society Members of Four Upazilas
Table 4.10: Number of Government Officials Interviewed in the Study
Table 5.1: UP Member’s Opinion on Monthly Meeting of PIC
Table 5.2: Number of Proposed and Approved Projects under FFW Program
Table 5.3: Civil Society Members Opinion on Repeating Previous Projects
Table 5.4: Beneficiaries Opinion on Fairness in VGF Selection
Table 5.5: Beneficiaries Opinion on the Way of VGD Women Selection
Table 5.6: Allocation of FFW Program in Four Sampled Upazilas
Table 5.7: Civil Society Members Opinion on Irregularities in VGD Program
Table 5.8: Civil Society Members Opinion on the types of FFW Irregularities
Table 5.9: Beneficiaries Opinion on Timing of Food Grains Distribution
Table 5.10: MPs Influence in Selecting Projects
Table 5.11: Civil Society Members Opinion on VGF Irregularities
Table 5.12: Beneficiaries Opinion on Favoritism Imbedded in the Projects

List of Figures

Figure 2.1: Growth of World Population vis-à-vis World Agricultural Production
Figure 2.2: Poverty Situation in Bangladesh
Figure 3.1: Distribution of Wheat/Rice for VGD Program
Figure 3.2: Distribution for Pusti Atta for VGD Program
Figure 4.1: Population of the Study Areas
Figure 4.2: Number of VGD and VGF Card Holder in Four Sampled Upazilas
Figure 4.3: Professions of the Beneficiaries of Four Upazilas
Figure 4.4: Work Experience of the Chairmen of Four Upazilas
Figure 4.5: Work Experience of the Members of Four Upazilas
Figure 4.6: Level of Education of the Civil Society Members
Figure 5.1: Irregularity in Conducting Monthly Meetings of SSN Programs
Figure 5.2: Civil Society Members Opinion on UPs Manipulation in VGD Selection
Figure 5.3: Beneficiaries Opinion on Manifestation of VGF List
Figure 5.4: Civil Society Members Opinion on Irregularities in FFW Program
Figure 5.5: Civil Society Members Opinion on Repeating Previous Projects
Figure 5.6: Civil Society Members Opinion on UPs Political Favoritism
Figure 5.7: Civil Society Members Opinion on Feasibility Study of FFW Projects
Figure 5.8: Beneficiaries Opinion on the Ways of VGD Women Selection
Figure 5.9: Civil Society Members Opinion on Bribery of UP in Exchange of Cards
Figure 5.10: Civil Society Members Opinion on UPs Grafting of FFW Money
Figure 5.11: Civil Society Members Opinion on Irregularities in FFW Program
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The research project entitled “Transparency and Accountability for Ensuring Food Security in Bangladesh: A Study on Field Institutions” has been an outcome of a generous assistance from a number of institutions. At first, we acknowledge and thank NFPCSP team for their cordial support and relentless guidance in the design, preparation and insightful inputs in this research endeavor.

The research has drawn attention on a substantial number of literature on food security, world food conditions, field institutions and the relevant governance issues on Social Safety Net programs covering food, food crisis, food insecurity, transparency and accountability of food distribution and management amongst the distressed. The study has the due buttressing of data and information collected from four Upazilas of Bangladesh named Patgram in Lalmonirhat, Singair in Manikganj, Fulchhari in Gaibandha and Shibchar in Madaripur districts. It has mostly been benefited through interview sessions conducted under several types of structured questionnaire with four different groups of stakeholders i.e., the government officials (UNO, PIO, UWAO, UFC, UFO, UEO, UAO, UAEO, USO, UCO etc.), the elected representatives (Chairman of the UPs, male and female members of the UPs, chairpersons of the PICs etc.), the beneficiaries (Card holders of several SSN programs and workers under FFW projects) and the civil society members, i.e., the teachers, imams and businessmen of the concerned Upazilas. The research team gratefully owes the interviewees, especially of government officials who despite their busy schedules gave valuable time for interview. The study also acknowledges the local offices of the national level NGOs like RDRS, PADOKKHEP, BRAC, Jagoroni Chakra Foundation etc. who work locally in association with the government offices and elected representatives to conduct the SSN programs in an effective and efficient way. Last but not least, it also acknowledges the learned officials of FAO Bangladesh office, FPMU and Ministry of Food and Disaster Management who have contributed with their valuable comments in various meetings and seminars throughout the preparatory period of this report and to the EU and the USAID for granting the financial support.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hunger is a global albeit a major problem for people of Bangladesh from time immemorial. Of the 200 million plus hard-core hungry souls worldwide, 28 are eking out an existence not fit for a human being in Bangladesh alone. The situation is likely to become grave with indiscreet accumulation of green house gases mostly by the developed economies in the biosphere causing unabated global warming: eventually resulting in, among other things, drastic dislocation in crop pattern and harvest yield as well as leading to melt down of the polar ice cap with rise in the sea level with consequent large-scale unsettling of the human habitat: rise of the sea level by a meter is enough to swallow one-third of the land mass in the southern coastal regions of the deltaic Bangladesh.

Added to this impending climatic disaster is the rippling effect of sudden financial meltdown in the global economy, as has been seen in different Asian economies in recent past and presently, right inside the fortress of the globalized economy itself- USA, causing tectonic shifts in the global financial system tremor of which has also touched South Asia. As the economy of Bangladesh is still largely beholden to the bounties of the affluent nations, any adverse situation in the developed spaces is bound to have its effect on the lives of teeming undernourished and malnourished millions. It is in the context of all these developments that heads of government of regional states had to voice in the recently concluded BIMSTEC summit in Delhi, the imperatives of building up of an emergency food stock reserve to face challenges of persistent food insecurity and to cope with emergency situations on regional basis.

The study is an attempt to assess the impact of different SSN programs presently prevailing in Bangladesh and their efficacy in order to make them more efficient and effective for the targeted segment of the society. Accordingly, it covers different governmental management aspects of the different food support programs like VGD, VGF, FFW of the GoB and recommends, given the resource constraints, the minimum remedial and corrective steps to be taken to optimize their desired objectives.

The findings are based on field-survey in four Upazilas: Patgram of Lalmonirhat, Fulchhari of Gaibandha, Singair of Manikganj and Shibchar of Madaripur, covering four
of the six administrative divisions of the country. The methodologies used include content and stake holders analysis, focused group discussions, (FGD) survey of beneficiaries, as well as those who have been left outside the SSN. The category of the respondents covers government officials, NGO activists, members of the civil society, and representatives of local opinion, all together numbering close to 500.

From the very outset, the study was beset with several difficulties: pervasive ignorance bred by widespread illiteracy was one. It posed a serious challenge in establishing an effective communication bridge -head with the targeted population even many of the local public representatives were found to be innocent of elementary literacy, not to speak of the general mass. The level of conscientization amongst the local people regarding what they are supposed to get and to what extent, their right and responsibilities as a conscious and responsible and not just responsive citizen of the country can well be imagined. This all the more underscores the indispensability of mass literacy which mercifully has received due attention of the government in recent times. This wide spread illiteracy as an impendiment on the way to a two-way effective communication system may be construed as a limitation on the present study.

Another type of limitation was set by the ubiquitous presence of the defense personnel as an obvious reminder of the condition of emergency which is still lingering on the country for quite some time. Though expected to be lifted any time soon, the study nevertheless had to be completed within the veil of the unnatural atmosphere of emergency.

A third limitation was caused by remoteness of some of the research locations, often compelling the researchers to dither through, all the communication improvements not withstanding.

The study starts with an overview of food insecurity in Bangladesh on global context the population boom vis-a vis declining productive land per capita and agricultural production exacerbated by environmental degradation with consequent rise in food price because supply and demand asymmetry as the main ingredient for food insecurity both at the sub-regional, national and local levels underscoring the fact that food security at the national, *ipso facto*, does not automatically ensure food security at individual level and it is the food security at house hold level Admittedly, it is closely linked with poverty, either
measured by direct calorie intake method (DCI) through household expenditure surveys (HES) or cost of basic needs (CBN) method.

Next, an overview of the several SSN programs like VGD, VGF, and FFW have been made under the rubric of program purpose, target group, program strategy, beneficiaries of the program, selection criteria, exclusion criteria, gender issue and administrative procedures followed for each of the individual program.

The role of field administration in managing these programs has also been briefly reviewed. In this connection, the Constitutional provision for local government administration as well as the existing structure of local administration at different tiers of rural local government bodies, especially at the Union level, their mandatory and optional functions vis-a-vis management of the VGD program, composition and functioning of the VGD committees/ sub committees have also been reviewed. Further, Development Service Package and its aims and objectives and its relationship with VGF programs have also been mentioned.

Next, the study attempts an overview of the four study areas in terms of basic information like population, area, literacy rate, land use and control, main crops followed by a socio-cultural mapping of people, institution and society. A comparison of the selected safety net programs in each union under the four sampled Upazilas is also made wherefrom it transpires that there is no clear-cut policy of the government as to on what basis the VGD, VGF cards are to be allocated for each Upazila. Further despite specification of the eligible age-group for the entitled card holders, deviation from the age requirement, particularly in the VGD programs at time seems to be the rule. The situation is further complicated by widespread illiteracy even amongst the elected representatives. It further transpires that people at the grass roots level are more dependent on Union Parisad rather than on Upazila administration, giving scope for the local dominant forces for an overwhelming role with Upazila and beyond at the cost of space for the general people.

The major findings have been grouped under aspects of governance, program, political and socio-cultural. Under the governance aspect, eleven issues have been touched. These are: lack of coordination in Upazila administration, irregular holding of the monthly meetings, lack of seriousness in project preparation and choice, inadequate monitoring of development projects, insufficient awareness of government officials in SSN committees,
unsatisfactory supervision of Upazila administration in selecting VGF beneficiaries, absence of well-designed job-specifications in Upazila administration, overburdening the UNO with plethora of responsibilities, frequent deviations from the set administrative procedures, lack of transparency in different SSN programs and lack of training.

Under the program aspect, the study identifies lacuna on thirteen counts. These are: lack of a comprehensive policy, persistence of corruption, overburdened responsibility, absence of any system of reward or recognition for the deserving, prevalence of poor road and communication system deterring effective supervision, unholy alliance between officials and elected representatives, unsatisfactory composition of the committees, dilemma about the nature of bounty to be accorded and in its form: whether in cash or in kind and if in kind, whether in the form of wheat or rice and also the distribution practices to be followed, irregularity in preparation of list of VGD beneficiaries, occasional adherence to and often deviation from the set rules and regulations, absence of any provision for reimbursing cost of travel allowance for inspection of the projects by the persons mandated to inspect or a system of reimbursing transportation cost of the food grains, receipt and disbursement of food grains on time, impediments on the way to reach the target people of out-reach areas.

Under the political aspect, eight specific issues are dealt with. These are: prevalence of political favoritism, lack of awareness, either absence or over-involvement of NGOs in respect of their level of commitment, general apathy on the part of governmental officials, collective manipulations of the Chairpersons of the local government bodies in the process of project selection, and favoritism and manipulation in SSN programs including hegemony of the UP Chairman, behind-the-scene control by the members of defense and other services and the consequential element of fear that influences the decision making process, the myth of public meetings and selection of VGD women, favoritism in selection of VGF beneficiaries, political influence.

Finally, under the socio-cultural aspect, the issues which have been taken into consideration are: lack of awareness on the part of beneficiaries, doling of free food as possible inducement to laziness, the all pervading practice of bribe and limit of its tolerance in terms of labor cost and deprivation.
Finally policy recommendations have been disaggregated under two categories: government-specific (eleven) and program specific (twenty-one). These are:

**Governance-specific:**
1. Monthly salary/honorarium of UP Chairperson/ Members be preferably increased substantially;
2. Eligibility of candidates to chairpersonship/ membership of UPs be restricted to educated persons;
3. Chain of accountability and supervisory role be ensured from top to the bottom;
4. Development works be planned, designed, implemented with proper feasibility and verifications;
5. UNO, presently burdened with chairmanship of at least 45 different committees, be relieved of some of his load which may be delegated to other Upazila level officials;
6. Upazila Youth Officer, Upazila Fisheries Officer, Upazila Livestock Officer, et al, presently with lighter loads may be assigned additional duties and responsibilities to make the spread of load more equitable;
7. UNO may act as advisor to a number of the Committees;
8. UNO to give a proactive role in development programs like FFW, VGD ,VGF enlisting active cooperation of PIO and UWAO and other Upazila level officials;
9. Active involvement of female UP members be ensured particularly in selecting VGF beneficiaries;
10. Data on different SSN programs be kept up-to-date, UP secretary be trained accordingly and the information be readily available for the sake of transparency;
11. Exemplary punishment be ensured in case of misappropriation in any of the program by the official/ elected members/Chairperson.

**Program-Specific recommendations:**
1. Political interference in program activities be stopped.
2. Possibility of giving rice in lieu of wheat both in VGD and VGF programs may be explored
3. Distribution of Atta by NGOs may be reconsidered;
4. Number of VGF, VGD cards may be increased on the basis of wards in each union;
5. Wheat/Atta/Rice may be distributed in 15-kg pack;
6. Presence of army to ensure fair distribution be encouraged;
7. VGD card holders be increased to cover vulnerable people and the validity period be extended to two years;
8. Volume of FFW be increased;
9. Both elected /appointed officials be accorded financial incentives;
10. Transport cost of collecting food grains from Upazila be reviewed on regional basis;
11. Wage of labor working under FFW also warrants review;
12. IG-VGD program be given priority by the Upazila officials;
13. Upazila livestock/Fisheries/Cooperative/Agriculture officials be entrusted with additional responsibilities for arranging income generating training for VGD women in collaboration with Upazila Rural Development Officer and the PDBF (Palli Daridra Bimochon Foundation);
14. Arrangements be made for keeping photograph of VGF beneficiaries;
15. VGF programs may be discontinued while there is no natural calamity or the effects of calamity have abated;
16. Scope of FFW may be widened;
17. Proxy chairpersonship by spouse of the actual one be done away with forthwith.
18. Monitoring of VGD, VGF and particularly of FFW be enhanced;
19. An effective rapport between local government and the civil society be established;
20. Feasibility of establishment of SMEs in the remote rural areas may be examined;
21. Age ceiling for VGD card may be reviewed.

In conclusion it has been pointed out that management of food distribution is no less important than increasing food production and, in case of management of food under SSN program there is no excuse for less than a satisfactory way of discharging the responsibility with proper transparency and accountability. The recommendations made in the study are but the first step towards such an effective management strategy.
1. Introduction

This chapter deals with the basic concepts like the raison d’ être of having a social safety net program, the philosophical justification of such SSN programs in the context of the present day society, the notion of transparency and accountability considered to be sine qua non for good governance. Further, different views on ‘food scarcity’ are illustrated to appreciate the thematic focus of the study and also to arrive at a new perspective for it.

1.1. Background Statement

The pervasive food insecurity throughout the world has become a major concern of today. The world has accumulated the highest amount of wealth of ever before and at the same time, there is also the highest number of poor people on the planet now. According to FAO, hunger has reached around 840 million people in recent years. Further, about 25% of the world’s population or 200 million people are extremely hungry and their sheer survival is threatened by food insecurity, under-consumption, malnourishment and hunger related diseases. In Bangladesh, about 20% (of 140 million) people are ‘hardcore’/ ‘ultra poor’ and they face severe food insecurity every year. According to the USAID, as many as 49% or about half of the Bangladeshi people are below the poverty line and one-third belong to the hard core poor, about 36% of the people eke out an existence on less than a dollar-a day. The recent global price hike of rice and other food stuff has further deteriorated condition of these poor.

Different studies show that approximately 33 million of the 140 million people of Bangladesh cannot afford an average daily intake of more than 1800 kilocalories, the minimum set by the WFP. For an average Bangladeshi, the average daily intake is 2190 kilocalories while the average for the other developing economies is 2828 kilocalories (Brot, 2005). The recent price hike has eroded purchasing power of poor to the extent that the number of poor below poverty line increased, according to Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), by addition of 8.5% of people numbering 2.5 million in 15 months of January, 2007 to March 2008 as much as 60% of earnings are spent to meet the minimal food requirements. This section of people cannot take adequate food everyday for their active and healthy lives.
Taken into consideration the acute food crisis and chronic malnutrition that prevail in the country, Government of Bangladesh formulated a food policy in 1988 aimed at achieving food security for all. The focus of that policy was only to ensure the availability of food grain. Later, it has been modified and eventually the National Food Policy 2006 was formulated in the light of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) of the country. This new Food Policy emphasizes to “enhance” the coverage of the SSN Programs targeting the “hard core poor” and “disadvantaged” groups and putting them into effect in an efficient way. Needless to say, the success of this policy relies heavily on ensuring transparency and accountability of field institutions which are responsible for delivering the benefits of SSN programs at grass roots level.

In recent times, the issue of food insecurity has become a burning problem in Bangladesh for increased price of rice and other essential foods necessary for survival. According to ‘Bangladesh Economic Outlook’, a quarterly update by private research group Shamunnay published in September 2008, food inflation for the poor is at above 20 percent in Bangladesh. The study also remarked that food inflation for the country's marginalized population is more than double compared to the national inflation rate (bdnews24.com).

According to the NFP 2006 (strategy-2.2), 'Access to food from private market for the hard-core poor, who are exposed to severe nutritional risk throughout the year, is inadequate.' Specially in the lean season, and so,' Government of Bangladesh, therefore, targets the population group, regions and seasons where nutritional stress is most acute through income transfers, targeted food distribution and public works programs.' Among others, three nationwide major programs i.e. Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF), Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) and Food-for-Work (FFW) have been carried out by line ministries and with assistance of donor agencies. Participatory selection and service delivery process is conducted by field/local institutions, elected local representatives and NGOs.

The present study focuses on management of three SSN programs and their governance issues. To do so, it specifically collected data on three SSN programs: VGD, VGF and FFW implemented in four Upazilas of Bangladesh, two from Dhaka division and the other two from Rajshahi division. It is postulated that supply of available food stock required for a particular region is not an answer to arrest the ever-burgeoning problem of
hunger and food insecurity, distribution of food with adequate nutrition is also important which may be achieved through practice of good governance. Without stability in politics and efficiency and effectiveness in governance, efforts to combat hunger and food insecurity are bound to remain an ever-difficult venture. Among different parameters of good governance, the present study emphasizes on finding out the status of transparency and accountability of concerned offices of both government and the elected representatives.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The objective of the research is to examine the current state of transparency, accountability and participation of the local field institutions that render different safety net programs i.e. VGD, VGF and FFW related to food security. It is assumed anyway that food insecurity is not just scarcity of food and other essential resources. The ubiquitous problem of ‘distribution’ of income and necessities of life is one of the major causes that precipitate and aggravate the global crisis acutely. In case of distribution of food and ensuring it to all people of the country, the government undertakes a number of initiatives in the form of SSN programs throughout the country especially in the severely vulnerable areas. According to the strategy 2.2 of the National Food Policy, “Access to food from private market for the hard-core poor, who are exposed to severe nutritional risk throughout the year, is inadequate...[And therefore, the government] targets the population group, reasons and seasons where nutritional stress is most acute through income transfers, targeted food distribution and Public Works Program.” (GoB, 2006).

The importance of the SSN programs and effectiveness of the concerned institutions are, therefore, invaluable without any questions. However, queries are raised in different forums about the efficacy and effectiveness of these programs. One of the leading and most perplexing questions is whether or not the benefits are trickled down to the target people i.e., most vulnerable, most food-insecure population. To answer this million dollar question and find out a reality-based solution, there is no alternative to an in-depth probe to different aspects of governance of the program and transparency and accountability of the people and institutions involved with the program. Thus, the study purported the following objectives while conducting the research:
**Institutional Quality**- Effectiveness of government offices and quality of elected leaders and their inter-linkage and performance.

**Interface Quality** – The nature of interaction and level of trust and expectations between supply side (government officials and elected representatives) and demand side (beneficiaries and local people) of food security programs.

**Civic Quality** – Level of awareness and impact of three SSN programs (VGD, VGF, and FFW) among beneficiaries and people of locality as a whole.

1.3. Conceptual Framework of the Study

Before we can have an in-depth study of different strategies of SSN programs like VGD, VGF, FFW, we need to answer certain pertinent questions: Why should we have the so-called SSN at all? What makes the society beholden to such activities that tend to favor the least advantaged segment of the society presumably at the cost of the rest? Why the society should commit itself to such obligations which bind it to an increasingly greater marginal cost for the society as a whole?

The utilitarian thinking from Bentham to Mills discourage undertaking of such enterprises. The Aristotelian *magnum opus* the – *Nichomachean Ethics* (ta-ethika), particularly Book V dealing with *justice*, or for that matter the smaller ones- *Eudemian Ethics* (EE) or even the third one the *Magna Moralia* are hardly of much help as the society of today is far more complex than what it was two and a half millennia ago. A new normative teleological or goal directing ethics based on what is virtue (*arete*), practical wisdom (*phronesis*) and good life (*endaimonia*) is to be found to win in the combative world of today so that our social life is virtuous (*eudaimon*) both in thought (*sophia*) and action.

Perhaps the philosophy of ‘*justice as fairness*’ propounded by the American academician and moral philosopher John Broadly Rawls (1921-2002), belonging to the *social contract* school in the tradition of Hobbs, Locke, Rousseau and Kant can be of some help. Rawls (1971) concept of *distributive justice*, in short is based on two principles: *Liberty Principle* and *Difference principle*. The liberty principle echoes fairness of justice as once voiced by Hume and also the fair choice situation described by Kantian moral imperative (*vernunftig*). Rawls appeals to the social contract by accepting that we all prefer more benefits and fewer burdens and hence we go for equal treatment to all. At the same time,
if justice is conceived as fairness, we are to agree that we are neither saints nor greedy egoists: just rational self-interested human beings. If we are allowed to make choice under a *veil of ignorance* we are likely to act on two notions: on a principle of egalitarianism and a *difference principle* that tells us to share social and economic inequalities *only* in cases that ensure greatest benefits to the least advantaged. The difference principle thus means that society may suffer difference in allocative resources if and only if that distribution ensures a better life for those who are now worse off. This is the original position: the Archimedean point, the fulcrum Rawls uses in his concept of distributive justice with the additional notions of *veil of ignorance* and *difference principle*. The veil of ignorance is one that essentially blinds people to all facts about themselves and this ignorance of details about oneself leads to principles which are fair to all and those in original position would adopt maximum strategy which would maximize the position of the least well off. According to Rawls, the first principle of justice entails such basics as freedom of speech. The second principle of justice implies that everyone should be under a condition of fair equality of opportunity and in case of any differentiation; opportunities are to be arranged so that they are of the greatest benefit to the least advantaged members of the society as enunciated in the difference principle. Rawl’s concept of *justice as fairness* has further been honed by his Harvard colleagues Robert Nozick, Michael Walzer, and Martha Nussbaum. It has also been influenced by Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen’s theory of Entitlement. The cumulative contribution of all these scholars provides a philosophical rationale for continuation of the different social safety net programs as integral part of distributive justice in the society (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2008).

Our second plank in the study has been the concept of Transparency and Accountability. These two terms often used in unison in recognition of their inseparability, are often referred to as the hallmark of good governance.

1.3.1. Transparency and Accountability

Transparency and accountability are the two inevitable terms that are often referred to as the hallmark of good governance. A good public administration is unthinkable without the virtues of transparency and accountability in the system. Both the terms are often used interchangeably. By transparency we mean a visible and clear system of administration well-aware to all walks of people. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines ‘transparent’ as
‘frank, open, candid, ingenuous’. Transparency is thus the antonym of secrecy, which is the traditional hallmark of public administration. While secrecy is essential in certain spheres of sovereignty, the general policy should be to place public administration in a glasshouse and let its functioning be known to the society at large.

Accountability, on the other hand, is defined as the state of being accountable, liable or answerable. To be accountable means to be obliged to report, explain or justify something (Maheshwari, 2002:1). It ensures that something is carried out as expected. Accountability means to be answerable to one’s senior when one renders a report of the decisions and the quantity and quality of action in the course of carrying out responsibilities.

Accountability is reinforced by punitive action. It also means that one can face different consequences ranging from censure to dismissal. L. D. White defines accountability as the ‘sum total of the constitutional, statutory, administrative and judicial rules and precedents and the established practices by means of which public officials may he held accountable for their official action’ (1926:495).

1.3.2. Accountability in Administration

The word ‘accountable’ was first used in English in 1583, in a financial context. The concept is a comprehensive one and covers all the activities undertaken by the government. The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary defines ‘accountable’ as ‘liable to be called to account, responsible (to, for)’. Webster’s New International Dictionary of the English Language gives a similar definition, explaining it as ‘liable to be called on to render an account’. This definition is significant, in the sense that it distinguishes ‘accountable’ from ‘control’. Strictly speaking, ‘control’ is contemporaneous with an action or event whereas accountability is post factum in nature: it is only after an act has been completed that one is called upon to render an account of it (Maheshwari, 2002:2).

1.3.3. Definition of Food Security

Defining the concept of ‘food security’ is not an easy task. How the extent of food insecurity measured is difficult to define in a clear-cut manner. Opinions also differ whether it is a qualitative or quantitative concept. The definition of food security used by
the government of Bangladesh is that of the 1996 World Food Summit, namely ‘access by all people at all times to the food needed for an active and healthy life.’

A Washington-based population survey report defined food insecurity as the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in a socially acceptable way. Hunger is the uneasy or painful sensation caused by a lack of food, and the recurrent and involuntary lack of access to food (MCH Data Report, 2006).

However, the idea of ‘food security’ is understood differently by different people. According to Eileen Kennedy (2002), “there is a clear demand worldwide for … simple, and rigorous methods to measure food insecurity and hunger. The emerging science devoted to developing context-specific, qualitative measures of food insecurity is responding to this demand.” That view is supported by Fajardo (2003), who notes that, “professionals place great hope in [new] methodologies. The measures are directly tied to people’s needs. [Thus] qualitative measures of food insecurity and hunger should be included in every effort to describe food security.” Similarly, Mason (2002) argues that a so-called ‘qualitative’ approach “would seem highly relevant – indeed overdue – especially if it is recognized that the issue of hunger goes beyond only energy intake itself”.

While food insecurity is a widely used concept, the number of researchers who have explicitly studied its measurement problems in a rigorous fashion is relatively small (see Chung et al 1997; Maxwell et. al. 1999). Those conversant with cutting edge techniques for assessing peoples’ perceptions of food insecurity and measures of the experience of hunger are even fewer. Moore et. al. (1999) noted that while their study of poor people’s own perceptions of well-being had begun by assuming that there was limited material it emerged that “there was even less material than we had expected.”

Interestingly, while the focus of much recent work has been on the experience of poverty it has been found that “food insecurity is commonly central to descriptions of the experience of being poor (Brock 1999).” This implies that poor people in countries like Slovenia, Egypt or Pakistan typically describe their experience of poverty (and fears associated with it) in terms of hunger, lack of food and anxiety relating to meeting future food needs (Tine, 1992; World Bank, 1999, 2001).
1.3.4. Transparency and Accountability in Food Security Program

The study postulated that governance or managerial aspect of food security program is very important which is often ignored giving minimal or less emphasis. In line with field experience and observation and for the purposes of the study at hand, we have ventured to find out some operational definitions. Both the terms ‘transparency’ and ‘accountability’ is defined in a distinct manner that is used in the study.

By transparency, the study means ‘a clear-cut and well-documented service delivery system that is well-informed and-well understood and further, well disseminated amongst the mass people in the food security program rendered by the government’. The basic requirement of different SSN programs, service delivery mechanisms, duties and responsibilities of local level administration are not well informed to the stakeholders of the programs. Thus, the openness of program and its basic information should be widely understood by the people of the community. These openness and understandings are conceived as transparency in the study.

By accountability we mean ‘the existence of answerability and liability of both elected and appointed officials responsible for different food security programs distributed at the grass roots level by the government’. The two tiers of local government – Upazila and Union Parishads – jointly render different SSN program at the grass roots level. How far workings of these offices are in consonance with government rules and regulations and particularly with the rules related to SSN programs are the core points that the research team designed to explore at the field level.

1.3.5. Essential Factors of Food Security

Four factors are assumed essential in achieving food security. These are:

*Availability of adequate food supplies* - there must be enough food to ensure that each person's daily energy and nutrient needs can be met.

*Access to sufficient food* even in a country with adequate food supplies, food security does not exist for those who cannot afford to buy enough and/or grow their own.

*Stability of supplies* - severe fluctuations in food availability or accessibility, caused by such factors as droughts, floods, sharp price increases or seasonal unemployment, leave people vulnerable.
Cultural acceptability - use of certain foods, food combinations or handling methods can be preempted by religious or cultural taboos.

So, the idea of transparency and accountability is considered essential in achieving food security through different SSN programs. The program of VGD, VGF and FFW, which is taken as experimental cases in the study among different SSN programs, are believed to be effective, if the presence of two essential elements of good governance – transparency and accountability are conspicuous by their virtual non-existence at the lowest tier of the local level administration.

1.4. Methodology of the Study

A number of methodologies have been followed in conductance of the research. As the present research depends extensively upon primary data collection and as there is a dearth of available study on the administrative/managerial aspect of food security program operated by local government institutions, a good number of Interview and Opinion surveys of government and elected officials working at field level institutions and other stakeholders have been made. In so doing, twelve sets of semi-structured questionnaire have been prepared to gather relevant data and information. Four Upazilas are selected to probe the research questions and meet the objectives of the sampling Upazilas. The Upazilas from two divisions, namely Rajshahi and Dhaka, are selected purposively in consideration of geographical remoteness (Urban and Rural) and economic status in terms of upper and lower poverty line based on BBS food accessibility and poverty line survey (as CBN, BBS-2000). However, the selected four Upazilas are as follow:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Upazila</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Division</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patgram</td>
<td>Lalmonirhat</td>
<td>Rajshahi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulchhari</td>
<td>Gaibandha</td>
<td>Rajshahi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singair</td>
<td>Manikganj</td>
<td>Dhaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shibchar</td>
<td>Madaripur</td>
<td>Dhaka</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that the project site is selected purposively two from Northern part of the country and the rest two from the capital.

As noted earlier, the study is based on the interviews of different stakeholders. Following table shows different categories of interviewee and the number of interview in each category.
Table 1.6: Category of Respondents of the Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Professions/ Positions held</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government Officials</td>
<td>Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO)</td>
<td>1×4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Project Implementation Officer (PIO)</td>
<td>1×4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upazila Women Affairs Officer</td>
<td>1×4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(for VGD and VGF program)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other Officials</td>
<td>5×4</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>NGO Officials tagged with VGF program</td>
<td>2×4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Elected</td>
<td>UP Chairman</td>
<td>3×4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representatives</td>
<td>UP Male Members</td>
<td>6×4</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UP Female Members</td>
<td>3×4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PIC Chairman</td>
<td>1×4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beneficiaries</td>
<td>FFW/ VGD/ VGF Beneficiaries</td>
<td>60×4</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-beneficiaries</td>
<td>8×4</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Society Members</td>
<td>School/College Teachers</td>
<td>3×4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imam of Mosque</td>
<td>3×4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local Businessman</td>
<td>3×4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>488</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the four studied Upazilas, the number of female respondents is higher than male respondents in different categories because one of the SSN program e.g., VGD program deals with only poor women of the locality. However, the other women respondents were different women Upazila officials and women UP members.

Apart from the above, other methodologies followed in the study are:
- Content Analysis,
- Stakeholder Analysis,
- Survey of beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries and civil society, and
- Force Field Analysis.

1.5. An Overview of the Sampled Upazilas

Four Upazilas have been studied for the research purpose. The four areas are selected on the basis of geographical locations and economic status in terms of upper and lower poverty line based on BBS food accessibility and poverty line survey. A brief overview of the study area is presented in the following.

Patgram
Patgram is an Upazila of Lalmonirhat district the area of which is 261.51 sq km. Patgram Thana, now an Upazila, was established in 1801. The Upazila consists of one municipality, 7 Union Parishads, 74 Mouzas, 56 villages and 27 enclaves. Other basic information about the Upazila is presented in the following table:

Table 1.1: Basic Information of Patgram Upazila

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main occupations</th>
<th>Agriculture 53.97%, agricultural laborer 25.44%, commerce 6.77%, wage laborer 4.1%, services 2.36%, others 7.36%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy and educational institutions</td>
<td>Average literacy 25.2%; male 33%, female 16.7%, Educational institutions: government college 1, non-government college 2, government girl’s high school 1, non-government high school 13, government primary school 66, non-government primary school 47, madrasah 25, vocational training school 1, computer training centre 2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land use</td>
<td>Cultivable land 24705 hectares, land under cultivation 21322 hectares, single crop land 23%, double crop land 62.62%, triple crop land 11.35%, land under irrigation 47%. Average distribution of cultivable land per head 0.13 hectare.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main crops</td>
<td>Paddy, tobacco, wheat, potato, jute and ground nut.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main fruits</td>
<td>Mango, jackfruit, black berry and betel nut.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication facilities</td>
<td>Roads: pucca 76.5 km, semi pucca 4 km and mud road 395 km; railway 26 km.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Banglapedia: http://banglapedia.org/ht/P_0109.HTM, Accessed on 5 November 2008)

Singair

The Upazila is close to the capital, Dhaka, located in Manikganj district covering an area of 217.38 sq km. Singair thana was established in 1919 and was turned into an Upazila in 1983. It consists of 11 union Parishads, 140 Mouzas and 236 villages. The table given below provides other basic information about the Upazila:

Table 1.2: Basic Information of Singair Upazila

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>231628; male 50.47%, female 49.53%; Muslim 92.83%, Hindu 7.06%, Christian 0.02% and others 0.09% of the total population.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy and Average literacy</td>
<td>21.05%; male 26.8%, female 15.3%. Educational</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Banglapedia: http://banglapedia.org/ht/P_0109.HTM, Accessed on 5 November 2008)
educational institutions | institutions: college 2, high school 21, madrasah 6, primary school (government) 69, primary school (non-government) 18.
---|---
Main occupations | Agriculture 39.08%, agricultural labourer 26.6%, commerce 11.71%, service 7.56%, fishing 1.52%, wage labourer 2.99%, others 10.54%.
---|---
Land use | Cultivable land 16194 hectares, fallow land 80 hectares; single crop 16.9%, double crop 71.37% and triple crop land 11.73%. Cultivable land under irrigation 51.5%.
---|---
Land control | Among the peasants, 23.06% are landless, 27.36% marginal, 27.43% small, 21.58% intermediate, 0.57% rich; cultivable land per head 0.07 hectare.
---|---
Main crops | Paddy, wheat, jute, potato, pulse, oil seed, sugarcane, vegetable
---|---

**Fulchhari**

It is an Upazila of Gaibandha district covering an area of 306.53 sq km. Fulchhari Thana, now an Upazila, was established in 1914. The Upazila consists of seven Union Parishads, 80 Mouzas and 74 villages. Other basic information about the Upazila is presented in the following table:

**Table 1.3: Basic Information of Fulchhari Upazila**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>168772; male 51.6%, female 48.4%; Muslim 94.5%; Hindu 4.5% and others 1%.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy and educational institutions</td>
<td>Average literacy 16.5%; male 22.9% and female 10%. Educational institutions: college 2, high school 9, junior high school 4, madrasah 15, government primary school 49, non-government primary school 55, satellite school 7, community school 4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main occupations</td>
<td>Agriculture 51.5%, agricultural laborer 26.27%, wage laborer 3.01%, fishery 1.65%, commerce 6.47%, service 2.84% and others 8.26%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land use</td>
<td>Total cultivable land 18772.50 hectares, fallow land 83 hectares; temporarily uncultivable land 488 hectares; single crop 23%, double crop 67% and triple crop land 10%; land under irrigation 27.93%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land control</td>
<td>Among the peasants 45% are landless, 35% small, 17% intermediate and 3% rich; cultivable land per head 0.11 hectare.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main crops</td>
<td>Paddy, wheat, <em>kaun</em>, <em>maskalai</em>, onion, chilli, peanut, mustard seed and katechu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication facilities</td>
<td>Roads: pucca 14 km, semi pucca 2 km and mud road 148 km; waterways 49 nautical mile; railways 6 km</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Shibchar**
It is an Upazila of Madaripur district covering an area of 321.88 sq km. Shibchar Thana was established in 1930 and was turned into an Upazila in 1983. It consists of 18 Union Parishads, 467 villages and 108 Mouzas. Other basic information about the Upazila is presented in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1.4: Basic Information of Shibchar Upazila</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy and educational institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main occupations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication facilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


1.6. Limitations of the Study

While conducting the research, field investigators faced a number of problems. The study thus is afflicted with a number of limitations. A few of these critical limitations are noted in the following:

Ignorance of the beneficiaries: Most of the beneficiaries of these programs are illiterate. They are not well aware of these programs. They have no basic ideas concerning VGD, VGF and FFW programs. Sometimes they kept silent in responding certain relevant questions of field investigators even though they are supposed to be the potential beneficiaries of these programs and in most cases gained first hand experience about these programs. Thus, the researchers find it difficult to gather pertinent information and data relevant to three SSN programs during their field investigation.

Presence of Army: The presence of Army in the management of these safety net programs somewhat helps in ensuring transparency and accountability, which is, of
course, otherwise in case of normal situation while military surveillance is withdrawn. In the absence of Army or law enforcing agencies, research findings may naturally vary in the management of SSN programs as those who have the tendency to commit any malpractices or irregularities naturally become more cautious to do so.

**Remoteness of some research areas:** It was often difficult on the part of the field investigators to reach the beneficiaries and other respondents especially in Char land in Fulchhari. Likewise at Shibchar, some villages were so isolated as there is no way of communication except narrow paths beside paddy land.

**Fear of Influential Elected Representatives:** The beneficiaries of these safety-net programs are the poorest of the poor of the society. They often hesitate to expose the real scenario fearing the oppression of influential elected representatives. It is a well-known fact that favoritism in different forms prevails in the safety net programs. But, in the course of interviewing, the beneficiary group replied in negative on the question of favoritism. Even, there is a sense of fear among respondents least they are victimized by the local influential for spilling out the beans.

**Time Constraints:** In conducting the study, the research team faced time constraints in doing such intensive research. A long-term in-depth research is needed to identify mismanagement and corruption in these programs.

**Time Dimension:** One remarkable phenomenon that the research team observed is that the mere presence of and monitoring by the Army personnel in the delivery of SSN program under the present regime acted as a big catalyst in upgrading quality of the service delivery and administration. Earlier, when such Army’s surveillance was not in practice, the management was naturally susceptible to more irregularities than the present time. The example of time dimension that makes a difference in quality service and administration posed a problem for the researchers as respondents were sometimes in need of explanation and clarification before they could answer to the questions asked by the field investigators.

**1.7. Organization of the Report**

The report includes seven chapters including introduction. The introductory chapter covers background statement, objectives of the study, overview of the sampled Upazilas, conceptual framework, methodology and limitations of the study. Chapter two discusses the state of food insecurity from both global and Bangladesh perspectives. It devotes to
explore the current situation of the availability of food in the world and its adverse impact on Bangladesh. Chapter three deals with how the situation of food insecurity is managed by the field institutions in Bangladesh. It analyses existing structure and jurisdiction of local administration with a view to managing some components of SSN programs i.e., VGD, VGF and FFW throughout the country. Chapter four discusses the contents and context of SSN programs with analysing the socio-economic condition of the direct beneficiaries and other stakeholders who are considered to be the service providers to the beneficiaries. The major findings of the study are depicted in the chapter five with exploring the result through governance aspect, program aspect, political aspect and socio-cultural aspects. Lastly the sixth chapter is decorated with policy recommendations from both governance and program perspectives, and terminated with a brief conclusion of the study in chapter seven.

2. State of Food Insecurity: Global and Bangladesh Perspective

This chapter seeks to explore the scenario of food insecurity the world is afflicted with. In recent times, scarcity of food has become a global problem which is not evident only in developing countries, but in some developed countries too. It then tries to identify the status of food insecurity in Bangladesh. At the wake of global food insecurity, Bangladesh is also one of the most vulnerable countries which is at high risk of hunger and malnutrition. In the following, the extent of food insecurity and major reasons behind it is explored.

2.1. Food Insecurity: A Global Perspective

Poverty is the root cause of food Insecurity. A food secure country can produce, store or import the food it needs and distribute it equitably. Food insecure countries typically have either large numbers of poverty-stricken people, or very low average food consumption levels, or large fluctuations in food supplies coupled with low consumption levels.

The population of most developing countries is still growing rapidly, even though the rate of growth has slowed down. Every year the global population increases by about 90 million. Most of the increase, around 95 percent, takes place in the developing world.

Taking the most conservative projections for world population growth over the next 30 years, food production will need to double in order to meet minimum requirements. Yet
the land available to produce this additional food is being degraded, largely as a result of deforestation, overgrazing and poor farming practices. FAO estimates that some 1,200 million hectares of land are affected by soil degradation. Erosion by wind and water accounts for just over 1,000 million hectares of this, with the balance caused by chemical and physical degradation.

At the same time, the availability of productive agricultural land per capita is declining in many countries because of population growth and the lack of reserves that could be brought into production. Data from 57 developing countries show that nearly 50 percent of all farms are smaller than 1 hectare in size. As a result, many poor farmers find that they can no longer make a living out of their land.

In the developing countries, people are migrating in large numbers to towns and cities in search of wage employment and better opportunities. Nearly 70 percent of all Latin Americans now live in urban areas compared to just 30 percent or so 30 years ago. Urban areas are growing by 6-8 percent a year in sub-Saharan Africa. Soon, more people will live in towns and cities than in the countryside in developing countries as a whole. The young and more vigorous people tend to migrate, leaving women, children and the old to carry out the burden of work.

2.1.1. Ingredients for Food Security
The main ingredients of food security are agricultural production. There should be a balanced match between agricultural production and population of the world. Following figure captures a brief snapshot of that comparison.

**Figure 2.1: Growth of World Population vis-a-vis World Agricultural Production**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Growth of world population</th>
<th>World agricultural production and population, Index, 1961=100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thousand millions, 1950-2100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Food prices in the world market have reached record highs in the recent years. The price of rice in the international market has nearly tripled to $963 per ton in May, 2008 from a year earlier, while wheat prices have almost doubled to $349 a ton during the same period. In Bangladesh, the retail price in April, 2008 of coarse rice rose 61% from last year, while wheat prices are up 56%. Soaring food prices have led to serious hardship for the poor, who have to spend about 70% of their total spending on food. The trend in food prices has also intensified inflationary pressure in the economy and is expected to worsen income inequality. In Bangladesh, food inflation now stands at about 12%. Out of the country’s total population, 40% are now living below the poverty line. The country’s per capita gross domestic product currently stands at $554 (ADB, 2008).

Although the volume of agricultural production has doubled over the past 30 years, this progress has bypassed many countries and peoples: in sub-Saharan Africa nutritional levels have actually fallen since the 1970s. Poverty is the root cause of under nutrition in a world which has been able to increase overall food production. A major problem is that the increase is spread unevenly around the globe, and that the poor cannot afford to buy what is produced.

An increasing population has to live off a dwindling supply of arable land and increasingly limited water resources. There is a vicious circle between increasing poverty and resource degradation. This makes it vital to achieve sustainable forms of agriculture.

To achieve sustainable food production and security, poor farmers need access to finance and productive resources, including advice and technical help. Rural incomes, status of
women, diets and food distribution systems need to be improved. Agricultural waste will have to be reduced. Land and other resources will have to be distributed more equitably. At the same time, progress in reducing population growth will help relieve pressure on resources and bring food production and supplies into balance with needs and demand.

In conclusion, it can be said that food insecurity is caused by multiple factors and different countries are trying to tackle the problem with different strategies. Degradation of lands and other natural disasters has lessened the production of foods in some parts of the world. The reduced agricultural production as well as increased population of the world is threats to global food security.

2.2. Food Insecurity in Bangladesh: Status and Current Trends

Bangladesh is an agrarian country. Despite its agrarian characteristics and the fact that majority of people live in some way or other on agriculture, Bangladesh is yet to achieve self-sufficiency in food production. Bangladesh was a chronic food-deficit country in the past and fortunately has turned, lately, near self-sufficient in food production. In recent times, however, the challenge of food security in Bangladesh is enormous. In spite of making considerable socio-economic progress over the years, Bangladesh still has the third largest number of poor after China and India, a segment of which is chronically malnourished, suffering from silent disaster. Such large-scale malnutrition and hunger result in unpreventable sufferings, diseases and losses of productive potential of the toiling mass. The prevalence of undernourishment, according to latest report of FAO, mentioned in the following table reveals that 30% people are still undernourished in Bangladesh.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Population (in Thousands)</th>
<th>Number of People undernourished (in millions)</th>
<th>Prevalence of undernourished in total population (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>115674</td>
<td>128914</td>
<td>150517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>40.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The state of food insecurity in the world, SOFI, 2008, FAO

While poverty is an overall denominator of this food insecurity in the country, the additional intensifiers are disability (gender, age, and physical challenge) and location (disaster proneness, access to the market, etc) as well as other aspects related to utilization (education, awareness, cultural practices, etc). Issues of governance and accountability
further thwart attempts at providing targeted SSNs and price stabilization (Mishra and Hossain, 2005).

The Government of Bangladesh has identified Food Security as an important factor contributing to its socio-economic stabilization and development. Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. To discuss food security, its importance is to be considered. These are availability of adequate food, stability in food supplies, access to food, and nutrition security. Bangladesh has made a steady progress in the expansion of food production. However, because of the increasing population pressure there has been an extensive use of land to meet the growing demand for food. Despite the growth in food production and its availability, food insecurity is still a major problem mainly because of the lack of purchasing power and thus of access to food, especially for the ultra poor community. A major portion of the rural population is landless, and as labors they depend on casual earning for their livelihood. Due to the seasonal variation in agricultural employment and limited employment opportunities in non-farm sector, millions of people suffer from chronic and transitory food insecurity. The average Bangladesh diet is deficit in energy by about 15 percent. It is seriously unbalanced with an inadequate intake of fat, oil, fish/animal protein, fruit and vegetable (Amin and Farid, 2005).

In order to understand better the nature and extent of the food security situation and the possible ways of improving the situation, it is important to distinguish between food security at the national, local, household and intra-household levels. The ultimate goal is to meet the food requirements of the people at all levels. Food security at the national level is determined by the availability of enough resources for the whole population. The most widely used indicators are quantities of available food compared with needs, as well as import requirements compared with the country’s capacity to import.

At the local or sub-regional levels, food security can be measured by comparing regional nutritional requirements with availability of dietary calories per head. Furthermore, the problem is increasingly being considered in terms of seasonal or grass roots level. At the household level, food security is dependent on a household’s access to enough food. Thus it is closely linked with the issue of poverty, access, sufficiency, vulnerability and
sustainability. At the household level, food security is measured by actual dietary intake of all household members using household income and expenditure surveys (Amin and Farid, 2005; ADB, 2008). It is important that changes in socio-economic and demographic variables be monitored continuously over time.

2.2.1. Identifying the Food Insecure

Food security at the national level is perhaps best described as a satisfactory balance between food demand and food supply at reasonable prices. Food security at national level, i.e., self-reliance in food at this level does not necessarily mean food security at the household or individual level. We have to disaggregate simply because we may be food secure at the national level, but have a considerable number of food insecure households. Food insecure households will generally be identifiable in regional or socio-economic terms.

It is important as a first step in developing an appropriate strategy for enhancing food security to identify the nature and level of food insecurity problems. Although some household problems can be tackled at the national level, and some national level problems will respond to an increase in household entitlements, the interaction between the different levels of food security are critical in devising an effective response. To visualize the role of the government in clear terms, it is necessary to develop mechanisms to take background research and analytical exercises and disseminate results.

It has been argued that food security at national level does not necessarily mean food security at the household or individual level. Thus, overall production or availability of food grain may be inaccurate indicator of what the vulnerable groups in the population can actually acquire. Food may rank highest among basic human needs, but it will not be reflected in the market as long as it is not adequately backed up by purchasing power (effective demand).

Even when aggregate food supplies are adequate, a number of factors may prevent poor households or individuals from acquiring enough food. Income levels of the poor may be insufficient to enable them to purchase the necessary food at the prices prevailing in the market. These households may also lack the necessary assets or access to credit to help them get through difficult times. Moreover, they may find themselves outside any public
assistance or other programs that would provide them with transfers in-kind or as cash to supplement their food acquisition capacity.

Poverty and hunger, as we know, are not simply economic problems in the narrow sense, but more importantly, they have social and political dimensions as well. Since the market does not care about the food security needs of the food deprived population, the government will have to play the caring role if the objective of ensuring food security of all citizens is to be achieved in Bangladesh because of so high incidence of absolute poverty and un (under) employment.

Moreover, adequate food availability at the household level does not necessarily mean that all members of the household enjoy access to enough food. In particular, women and children often suffer from inequalities in intra-household food distribution. Protein-Energy-Malnutrition (PEM) describes a spectrum of clinical disorders and is the most important public health problem. However, investigations further suggest that when commonly consumed cereal diets meet energy needs, they meet protein requirements as well. Balanced diet is a food security related problem, which is not directly related with poverty in Bangladesh (Amin and Farid, 2005).

Food security at household level is closely linked with poverty. These poverty and food security problems are massive, with approximately half of the population lacking the resources to acquire enough food and consequently remaining below the poverty line. Two approaches are generally used for measuring the incidence of poverty: direct calorie intake (DCI) method and cost of basic need (CBN) method. The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) has estimated the extent of poverty using the DCI method through its successive Household Expenditure Surveys (HES). In addition, the CBN method of estimation has also been introduced in the household expenditure surveys.

Table 2.2: Poverty Situation in Bangladesh Measured by the Cost of Basic Need Method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locations</th>
<th>Percent of Population below poverty line</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td></td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>42.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td></td>
<td>61.2</td>
<td>55.2</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>46.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td></td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above table and figure show a picture of the incidence of poverty from 1991-92 to 2000, as measured by the CBN method. It appears that the percent of people falling below absolute poverty line decreased from 58.8 percent in 1991-92 to 49.8 percent in 2000. The hard-core poverty level also decreased over the period, from 42.7 percent in 1991-92 to 33.7 percent in 2000. Both rural and urban poverty levels decreased during the period.

It appears from the above table that the incidence of poverty falling below both upper and lower poverty line decreased from 1991-92 to 2000. Both rural and urban poverty also decreased during the period. However, for urban areas incidence of poverty decreased from 1991-92 to 1995-96 and then increased in 2000. It would be important to note that the overall incidence for poverty was higher in the CBN method than in the DCI method.

Thus, it is observed from the above discussion that poverty and hunger as well as malnutrition and undernourishment are quite common in Bangladesh. The SSN programs and other interventions of government try to minimize the level of severity of food insecurity. Apart from supply of adequate foods to the hard-core poor people, the present study emphasized on a responsive and responsible government to combat the threat of food insecurity.
3. Managing Food Security at Local Level: An Overview of the Role of Field Administration

The chapter devotes to discuss the composition of different tiers of local government in Bangladesh. It also highlights the changing nature in the structure, procedure, functions and legal aspects of local level administration. Besides, it discusses, in detail, the three Social Safety Nets i.e., VGD, VGF and FFW along with the objectives, basic requirements and managerial aspects of them.

Field administration is an essential institutional intervention intended to promote development at the field or local level. To ensure overall development of the society at
large, especially at grass-roots level, it has utmost importance. In Bangladesh, it spreads over different administrative hierarchies, i.e., the division, the district and the thana and finally at the lowest echelon – the union, a local government unit consisting of a group of villages (Ali, 2008). Like the central bureaucracy, field administration in Bangladesh inherits colonial epitome in its structure and functions. From British Raj to present, field administration of the country has undergone kaleidoscopically different structural changes with its consequent repercussions in successive regimes, especially after independence in 1971.

3.1. Constitutional Provision for Local Government Administration

In any democratic polity, local government institutions are given legal mandate either by Parliamentary acts or in the Constitution itself by incorporating relevant provisions. Bangladesh’s Constitution of 1972 clearly spelt out the legal modalities and responsibilities of local government. Article 59, Chapter III of the Constitution states, “Local Government in every administrative unit of the Republic shall be entrusted to bodies, composed of persons elected in accordance with law”. Article 60 further states “for the purpose of giving full effect to the provisions of article 59 Parliament shall, by law, confer powers on the local government bodies referred to in that article, including power to impose taxes for local purposes, to prepare their budgets and to maintain funds” (Constitution of People's Republic of Bangladesh, as modified up to 17 May 2004). It seems necessary to mention that if the duties and responsibilities of local government institutions are not demarcated by the Constitution or by the act of the parliament, or if there is no scope for the government to decentralize powers to elected local bodies, it will be difficult to devolve powers.

3.2. Existing Structure of Local Administration in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has a unitary form of government having six administrative divisions: Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi, Barisal and Sylhet. Each Division is administered by a generalist administrator – Divisional Commissioner, and is further subdivided into Districts with a Deputy Commissioner (DC) as the Chief Administrator. After the administrative reorganization putting into effect in 1982, the country was divided into 64 Districts. 21 of these Districts existed for a long period while the rest are the ones upgraded from former Sub-Divisions. The 21 old Districts are now popularly known as Greater Districts (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/District). Below the district, there are the
Thanas numbering 490 in the country. However, during 1982-1990, 460 Thanas were upgraded to Upazilas or Sub-Districts. With the abolition of the Upazila system in 1991, the Upazila Regional Administrative System reverted to the earlier Thana structure (http://www.geocities.comicolg2006The_Local.htm).

Below the national level, divisional level is the highest echelon of administration where Divisional Commissioner plays the pivotal role within the division. After that, the District and Thana administrators are assisted by a large number of officials as well as professional and technical personnel appointed by the central government. Local government in urban and rural areas is entrusted to bodies elected by the people. Such bodies are called Municipalities or Paurashavas (numbering 308) in urban areas and Union Parishads or Union Councils (numbering 4,498) in rural areas (BBS, 2008). Six of the largest Municipalities, Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi, Barisal and Sylhet have been given metropolitan status and are known as City Corporations. For many years, the first four City or Municipal Corporations were managed by nominated rather than elected Mayors, although members of the City Corporation Council (Ward Commissioners) have been elected from the respective wards. Once again, in March 1994, the four metropolitan areas had their Mayors elected directly by the popular franchise (http://www.geocities.comicolg2006The_Local.htm). On 19 October 2008, the council of advisers of Caretaker Government approved the Local Government (Municipality) (Amendment) Ordinance 2008 and Local Government (City Corporation) (Amendment) Ordinance 2008 (The Financial Express, 20 October 2008).

At present, only one local government institution, i.e., the Union Parishad – the lowest tier of administration, is functioning through elected representatives in rural Bangladesh. According to the latest amendments of the Local Government (Union Parishads) Ordinance, 1983 a union is divided into nine wards. Each UP consists of a Chairman and nine members in the general seats – one from each ward. In addition, three seats have been exclusively reserved for women members, who are elected by the voters of the concerned three wards. The UP Chairman is directly elected by the voters of the entire union, while the voters of the concerned ward elect nine members in the general seats on the basis of adult franchise. The Chairman is considered a member of the Parishad though he enjoys the privileges of using casting vote as and when required. Both Chairman and
members are paid honoraria by the government (Siddiqui, 2005). Union Parishad is generally responsible to perform the following activities:

- Preparation of a comprehensive Union Plan and inclusion of inter-ward development projects after identification and prioritization;
- Assist and cooperate for the development of primary schools, supervise their functioning and motivate people for spreading literacy;
- Ensure provision of health services at the Union Health Centres, supervise family planning related activities and services and monitor the same. Arrange for supply of safe drinking water and promote sanitation program;
- Construction of inter-ward roads, maintenance of the same, management of small scale irrigation and water resources;
- Implementation of afforestation program along the Union Parishad roads and all earthen embankments;
- Peaceful resolution and amicable settlement of inter ward disputes;
- Promote social resistance over violence against women, terrorism, all types of crimes and cooperate with administration for maintenance of law and order;
- Up-to-date registration of birth, death and marriages based on report received from Gram Parishad;
- Assist Upazila Parishad in the preparation of inter ward agricultural and fisheries development projects and take necessary action;
- Cooperate with and advise all agencies within the Union having credit programs and help rural poor to participate in the same;
- Increase awareness for women and child development and take concrete actions where necessary;
- Encourage people to undertake cottage industries with good potentials and facilitate the involvement of disadvantaged and poor people in various income generating activities. (http://www.lgd.gov.bd/html/up_functions.html)

3.4. Management of SSN Programs

3.4.1 Vulnerable Group Development (VGD)
According to Government Manual, *VGD Program Implementation and Management Training 2007-2008*, VGD is the largest program targeting women in extreme poor under the Department of Women’s Affairs. The VGD beneficiaries are involved in government and NGO programs for literacy, training and credit for self-employment. This program is implemented through Union Parishads. In the case of wheat/rice, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs issues Grants Order (GO). For 21 Upazilas, Department of Women Affairs issues Allocation Order (AO) and for the rest 357 Upazilas, Department of Relief and Rehabilitation issues Allocation Order (AO). These allocations are sent to Upazila Nirbahi Officer and he/she issues Delivery Order (Request Letter). After receiving it, the Delivery Order (Delivery Letter) is accordingly issued by the Upazila Food Controller. Finally, the Chairman of UPVGD Committee takes food grains from Upazila Food Godown and distributes the same to beneficiaries.

In the case of *Pusti Atta* (fortified wheaten flour), Ministry of Women and Children Affairs issues Government’s Grant Order (GO). The Allocation Order (AO) for 36 Upazilas is issued by the Department of Women Affairs while the Department of Relief and Rehabilitation issues Allocation Order (AO) for 66 Upazilas in favor of their respective designated NGOs. After receiving AO, NGOs receive wheat from the food godown through the Upazila Food Controller and prepare Atta for distribution. Finally, the Chairman of UPVGD Committee receives Atta from the relevant NGO and distributes the same among beneficiaries. The process starting from the allocation by the Ministries to the distribution of wheat/rice as well as *pusti atta* by the UPVGD committee can be seen in the Annexure II and III respectively:

A brief description of the committees involved at different levels of administration in the allocation and distribution of food/rice of VGD program is provided in the following discussion.

**District VGD Committee**
District VGD Committee (see Annexure IV for its composition) implements, coordinates and monitors the program at district level. Members of the committee sit for meeting at least once in a month.
The major duties of District VGD Committee are:

- to ensure successful and effective management of VGD Program in accordance with the circular, program implementation policies and specific target fixed by the Department of Relief and Rehabilitation and Department of Women Affairs;
- to review progress of VGD program’s activities and to take effective measure in implementing these activities;
- to provide guarantee for the distribution of specified amount and quality of food allocated for VGD women;
- to take effective measure on time in receiving money of incidental and transportation costs;
- to provide guarantee for timely and regular submission of the reports;
- to provide necessary advices for the development of socio-economic condition of VGD women;
- to provide proper advice in identifying any problem and solving of that which arisen from the implementation of the project and to solve those properly with skills;
- to receive monitoring report from District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer and District Women Affairs Officer and to review it;
- to highlight success stories of VGD program and prepare monthly report for sending to the Department of Relief and Rehabilitation on time (Department of Women Affairs, 2007-2008:15-16).

**Upazila VGD Committee**

Upazila VGD Committee (see Annexure V for its composition) is responsible for ensuring overall coordination, proper implementation and monitoring activities of VGD program at Upazila level. The members of the committee sit in the meeting once in a month.

The major duties of Upazila VGD Committee are:

- to ensure the selection of VGD women according to rules and regulations and to verify/investigate this selection on the spot. The verification and observation activities are jointly performed by UWAO/PIO and NGO representative. The NGO representative, as stated in the relevant circular, should be actively involved in the overall selection process;
to allocate VGD cards at Upazila level according to proportional food insecurity, poverty and density of distressed population;

to provide assistance to NGOs in selecting VGD women and providing development package services (training package) to beneficiaries;

to give responsibilities to an Upazila officer (Tag Officer) to monitor food distribution system of each Union Parishad and verify accuracy of food distribution;

to follow the schedule of distribution;

to ensure the disbursement of money of incidental fund and transportation costs in time;

to ensure the submission of monthly report in time.

**Upazila IGVGD Sub-committee**

Upazila IGVGD Sub-Committee (see Annexure VI for its composition) is responsible for ensuring overall coordination, implementation and monitoring of development service package at Upazila level. The members of this committee must meet at least once in a month. The Sub-committee is responsible to Upazila VGD Committee for its functions.

The responsibilities of Upazila IGVGD Sub-committee are:

- to monitor the activities of assigned NGO at Upazila level;
- to ensure accuracy of the list of VGD women by verifying it for including in income generating program;
- to ensure implementation of awareness raising and skill development training;
- to ensure technical assistance in training;
- to review the progress of group wise social, health and nutrition related activities of VGD women regularly;
- to review the progress of income raising program and loan activities regularly;
- to review the progress, problems and solutions thereof in the monthly meeting and take suitable decision and to provide written report to the Upazila VGD Committee through the UNO.
Union VGD Committee

Union VGD Committee (See Annexure VII for its composition) is responsible for implementing VGD program at Union level. In fact, it is the committee which is entrusted to distribute wheat/rice directly to the distressed women at grassroots level.

The duties of Union VGD Committee are:

- to ensure proper selection of VGD women on the basis of specified criteria;
- to ensure proper distribution of wheat/rice, especially to make sure that VGD woman can receive 30 kgs. per month;
- to ensure that the food is distributed on specified distribution date and all the records (master roll, store register, savings register, inspection book) are preserved properly by the member secretary of the committee;
- to give necessary support to associate NGO and provide them overall assistance in delivering development service package;
- to ensure proper implementation of the management of savings in Non-governmental organization;
- to arrange special meeting for increasing social awareness for VGD women at Union level where there is no development associate for non-governmental organization;
- to ensure safe and proper storing of food grains;
- to place signboard at UP premise which includes necessary particulars like the name of the centre, total number of VGD women, amount of food ration, distribution date, amount of compulsory monthly savings of each woman (at least Tk. 8 per month) and duration of VGD food cycle;
- to ensure that UP chairman submits monthly progress report to UNO by the 5th day of next month (UP Secretary will take necessary action in this regard).

Development Service Package

As stated earlier, selected distressed women are given monthly 30 kgs of wheat/25 kgs of Fortified Atta for a 24-month cycle under VGD program. As a partial requirement of this program, the relevant associate NGO, being a non-governmental service provider, is responsible for providing them a development service package which includes the opportunity of getting training, savings management and micro-credit. The rationale
behind this service package is to enable the VGD women to come out from extreme poverty. The main objectives of bringing them under this service package are:

- to make them competent to get employment opportunities;
- to enhance their social empowerment through providing awareness raising and income generating training;
- to continue micro-credit and other assistance at the time of food assistance cycle and after the completion of food cycle;

Training

VGD women are primarily imparted two types of training, viz., life skill training and income-generating training. The former includes the matters of food and nutrition, disaster management, HIV/AIDS, health and hygiene, women empowerment, etc. while the latter focuses on areas like, poultry farming, vegetable gardening adjacent to home, cow/goat rearing and small business management. In the case of the latter, the associate NGO sends the list of participants/VGD women for income-generating training along with market feasibility study report to concerned sub-office of WFP. After the necessary approval of concerned sub-office, the NGO conducts the training. Usually, each participant receives training on anyone of income-generating areas with mandatory training on the small business management for everybody.

Savings Management

Apart from training, the associate NGO is responsible for introducing savings management activities for VGD women. The process through which these activities are carried out is as follows:

- Savings of VGD women are deposited to branch office of NGO or bank. Separate pass book is maintained for each woman in which savings related information is written.
- VGD women are able to withdraw 50 percent of savings money at any time. Women should be encouraged to keep active their accounts after the completion of VGD cycle. It is expected that the savings money withdrawn after the completion of food cycle will be utilised in productive income-generating activities.
- UP Chairman, member and member secretary of UPVGD committee monitors regularly whether savings money is being deposited.
Savings money is collected by NGO workers on weekly basis through village organisation/group meeting. Weekly savings money is at least Tk. 8 (more than this amount can be deposited if anybody desires).

Each VGD woman receives 6 percent interest rate on her savings money.

Each VGD woman is to select one or more representatives as nominee(s) who can withdraw money in case of her death.

The Department of Women Affairs is vested to exercise its authority if savings money is not returned properly by the NGO.

The head office of NGO submits report to the concerned sub-office of WFP on quarterly basis.

Credit
The third and last ingredient of the development service package under IGVGD program is credit which is a prototype of much publicized micro credit program. Like savings management, the credit component of the package is carried out in the following manner:

- Each VGD women is entitled to receive credit.
- At least 60 percent of VGD women should be covered by this program.
- The credit money must be utilised in income-generating activities.
- NGO authority grants loan for profitable income-generating activities based on market feasibility study.
- Credit is given without any collateral.
- At the initial stage, a VGD woman is entitled to obtain credit up to Tk. 3000 and afterwards up to Tk 5,000. The service charge against credit should not exceed 12 percent.
- The credit activities are conducted in accordance with the existing rules and regulations of NGO (Department of Women Affairs, 2007-2008:24).

Monitoring and Reporting
The associate NGO prepares annual action plan on quarterly basis. It then forwards the plan to the Department of Women Affairs, concerned district offices, head and sub-offices of WFP for necessary endorsement. The branch office of NGO submits Upazila wise project implementation report on development service package including training on
quarterly basis to the sub-office of WFP within the 15 days after the end of the quarter. For ensuring proper monitoring and supervision, especially on training, the officials of NGO headquarters frequently visit training centres and provide feedback, if necessary, for professional skill development of field level trainers. Needless to say, this kind of monitoring is helpful for maintaining the qualitative standard of training. Moreover, the activities of NGO, responsible for providing service package, are monitored by the Department of Women Affairs. The Department of Relief and Rehabilitation and the WFP are also assigned to undertake necessary monitoring and supervision for the proper implementation of special service package. (Department of Women Affairs, 2007-2008:25-26)

3.4.2 Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF)

The central managing authority of VGF program is the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management. The Ministry circulates Grant Order (GO) to the Department of Relief and Rehabilitation informing number of Upazila wise VGF cards and the amount of food grains to be distributed against each card. The Department of Relief and Rehabilitation issues the GO in favor of DC of each district mentioning Upazila wise number of VGF cards, amount of food grains and amount of transportation and incidental costs. The DC then reallocates food grains and relevant costs in favor of Chief Executive of City Corporation/Upazila Nirbahi Officer/Chairman of Paurashava. However, in the management of VGF program right from the district to the Union a number of committees are involved whose composition functions are attached to Annexure VIII.

The District VGF Committee is mainly responsible for reallocating food grains and money for transportation and incidental costs in accordance with the GO issued in favor of the district. It is also entrusted with the responsibility for ensuring proper implementation and monitoring of the progress of VGF activities within the district.

However, below the District VGF Committee, Upazila VGF committee (see Annexure IX for its composition) functions the main functions of which are:

a. to approve list of VGF beneficiaries prepared by UP in accordance with the relevant circular of the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management and issue cards accordingly;

b. to monitor whether the concerned UP receives food grains from the local godown in time and distributes those accordingly.
The member secretary of the committee is responsible to preserve store register of food grains, master roll and other accounts for the purpose of auditing.

Apart from this, the main functions of the Union VGF Committee (see Annexure X for its composition) are:

a. to prepare the list of beneficiaries under VGF program on the basis of guidelines issued by the Ministry;

b. to arrange the issuance of VGF cards approved by Upazila committee;

c. to make necessary measures for receiving food grains from the Upazila godown and distributing the same in time;

d. to preserve list of VGF cards properly.

The preparation activity of the list of the beneficiaries must be started by forming the committee immediately after receiving guidelines of VGF program. All the members of the committee have to sign in the list of VGF beneficiaries prepared at Union level and the list must be displayed in the notice board of Union Parishad.

3.4.3. Food for Works (FFW)

The Ministry of Food and Disaster Management releases food grains/cash money allocated in the budget in favor of Department of Relief and Rehabilitation by two or more installments. Apart from this, block grant of food grains/cash money is handed over to DCs through the Department of Relief and Rehabilitation on the basis of population, backwardness and destituteness of the districts. With the assistance of a district level committee constituted for the purpose, the DC, in turn, allocates food grains/cash money to the Upazilas within the district on the basis of the same criteria as applicable to districts. After receiving the information on the amount of allocated food grains/cash money from the DC through the UNO, the UP at its meeting selects projects on priority basis and forwards the list to the Upazila Rural Infrastructure Reconstructions and Maintenance Committee. The PIO conducts pre-survey and feasibility study of the projects included in the list and places them at the meeting of Upazila Rural Infrastructure Reconstruction and Maintenance Committee for its approval. The approved projects are implemented at Union level by the Project Implementation Committee (PIC) (Ministry of Food and Disaster Management, 2007:3).
Like the VGD and VGF programs, a considerable number of committees are in place at District, Upazila, and Union levels for the overall supervision, management and implementation of FFW Program. The composition and core functions of Rural Infrastructure Reconstruction and Maintenance Coordination Committee at District and Upazila level is attached in the Annexure XI and XII respectively.

Besides, District Karnadhar Committee (Please see Annexure XIII for its composition and core functions) meets once in a month for reviewing the progress of implementation of projects as well for monitoring and evaluation, sending monthly progress report to the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management and Department of Relief and Rehabilitation (Ministry of Food and Disaster Management, 2007:6-7).

Besides, another important Committee called as Project Implementation Committee (PIC) is constituted by the UP prior to the commencement of an approved project at Union level. After constituting the committee against a project, the proceedings of the UP are sent to URIR&MC for its approval. All the members of the committee must be the inhabitants of the concerned UP and at least one of them should be a female member. The total members of the committee are 5 to 7 including the chairman. Generally, the chairman is nominated from among the members of the concerned Ward where the implementation of the project takes place. In absence of the concerned Ward member, UP can nominate a member of another Ward as its chairman. The major functions of the PIC are as follows:

1. The chairman of the PIC, in collaboration with project secretary, labor leader and supervisors, takes measurement of project, maintains accounts, prepares files and records and preserves them for audit and account purposes.
2. The chairman and members of the PIC are jointly responsible for the implementation of the project.
3. The PIC chairman is responsible for receiving food grains/cash money, preserving and distributing them among labourers in accordance with prescribed guidelines.
4. While receiving the first installment of food grains/cash money of any project, the PIC chairman and secretary sign in a legal document mentioning to the effect that they would be responsible for the proper utilization of the allocated resources’. This document is executed on a non-judicial stamp of Tk. 150.
5. In case of inability of the chairman due to death or ill health or conviction during the project cycle, the responsibilities for the implementation of the project are vested to the secretary.

Details of local government bodies along with their structure and functions and the basic information and features of the SSN programs as discussed above, indicates that the legal framework and the rules and regulations thereof are exhaustively framed by the government. But how far these are maintained and adhered to in reality is the question that the study intends to examine in the course of field investigation. However, it needs to be mentioned here that the prevailing local government system has been designed to ensure coordinated administration of governmental resources for development purposes in anticipation to utilize both the elected representatives and trained government functionaries by bringing them together under the local councils at all levels (Ali, 2003; Siddiqui, 2005). The rationale behind this design is to make field bureaucracy as well as elected bodies responsive, responsible and accountable to the needs and expectations of the rural populace. Although the system has been criticized as a form of guided or controlled democracy since independence, little change, if any, has been initiated by the successive regimes because of their use of it for vested interest.
4. Social Safety Nets: Contents and Context

The chapter discusses about three specific SSN programs i.e. VGD, VGF and FFW. To know how the objectives of these programs are putting into effect, the rules and procedures in relation to the selection of beneficiaries and the modus-operandi for the distribution of benefits are examined. It is followed by an investigation of the statistical profile of the sampled Upazilas along with the socio-economic condition of beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

4.1. Social Safety Nets: An Overview of VGD, VGF and FFW

The concept of SSN describes a collection of services provided by the state, such as social welfare, unemployment benefit, universal healthcare, shelter for homeless etc. from falling into poverty beyond a certain level. There are several SSN programs currently operating in Bangladesh. Among these SSN programs the study considers VGD, VGF and FFW as test cases to explore governance aspects of these programs carried out by elected and local administrative bodies. Prior to do so, a brief description of these safety net programs is presented in the table given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Safety Net Area</th>
<th>Program Name</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Targeted Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Employment Creation | 1. Food for Works (FFW) | Employment generation for the poor in slack season Developing and maintaining rural infrastructure | 1. People who are functionally landless  
2. People who lack productive resources  
3. Women headed households where women are widowed, deserted, and destitute  
4. Day labor or temporary workers people with income less than tk. 300.00 per month |
| | 2. Cash for Works (CFW) | 1. Employment generation for the poor in slack season  
2. Developing and maintaining rural infrastructure | 1. People who are functionally landless  
2. People who lack productive resources  
3. Women headed households where women are widowed, deserted, and destitute  
4. Day labor or temporary workers whose income is less than tk. 300.00 per month |
2. Re-install social dignity of the Freedom Fighters  
3. Provide employment opportunities for the marginalized poor in some poverty pockets  
4. Provide income support to people loving in geographically disadvantaged areas to overcome seasonal unemployment | 1. Insolvent Freedom Fighters and their dependents from all 64 districts  
2. Marginalized poor living in geographically disadvantaged areas  
3. Seasonally unemployed people living in specific areas |
| **4. Fund for Reduction of Temporary Unemployment** |  |  |
| **Food Security** | 5. Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) | 1. Provide food and other emergency assistance to disaster victims | 1. Disaster / calamity victims |
|  | 6. Gratuitous Relief (GR) | 1. Provide food and other short term emergency assistance to disaster victims | 1. Disaster / calamity victims |
|  | 7. Fund for Mitigation of Risk of Natural Disaster | 1. Help mitigate sufferings of disaster victims  
2. Provide loans to set up small business | 1. Disaster / calamity victims |
|  | 8. Emergency Fund for Mitigating Risk of Natural Disaster | 1. Help mitigate sufferings of disaster victims  
2. Provide emergency help to disaster victims | 1. Disaster / calamity victims |
| **Education** | 9. Primary Education Stipend Project (PEPS) | 1. Increasing the number of primary school enrolments from poor family  
2. Increasing school attendance and reducing dropouts  
3. Increasing primary school completion rate  
4. Reducing child labor and poverty | 1. Children from female-headed households where head of the household is widowed, deserted, and destitute  
2. Children from day labor headed households  
3. Family of low income professionals (e.g. fishing, pottery, blacksmith, weaving, and cobbling)  
4. Landless or households that own not more than 0.5 acres of land |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10. Female Secondary School Assistance Program (FSSP)</th>
<th>1. Increasing female student enrolments at secondary schools 2. Reducing the incidence of under age marriage</th>
<th>1. All unmarried girl students studying in recognized institutions at secondary level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Empowerment</td>
<td>11. Rural Maintenance Program (RMP)</td>
<td>1. Empowerment of women 2. Maintaining rural infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. Vulnerable Group Development (VGD)</td>
<td>1. Developing life styles for women through training, motivating savings and providing scope for availing credit 2. Building social awareness on disaster management and nutrition through training in groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. Rural Social Services (RSS)</td>
<td>1. Promoting local organizations, leadership and participation of rural people especially of the disadvantaged groups in planning and execution of group-specific Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. Rural Mothers Centre (RMC)</td>
<td>1. Employing women in gainful economic activities 2. Educating women in life including health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15. Urban Community Development Program (UCD)</td>
<td>1. Mobilizing disadvantaged urban people to solve their immediate problems through group efforts 2. Facilitating income generating activities through training, credit etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Capacity Building, poverty Alleviation and Sustainable livelihood of the Socially Disadvantaged Women (SDW) and Their Children</td>
<td>1. Providing alternative livelihood for SDW and their children through vocational and skill development training 2. Reintegrate (Sews) in mainstream society</td>
<td>1. Socially disadvantaged women and their children in selected locations</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. Test Relief (Rural Infrastructure Maintenance Program) (RIMP)</td>
<td>1. Employment generation for the people in poverty stricken areas in rainy season 2. Developing and maintaining rural infrastructure</td>
<td>1. Generally a location is targeted where poverty is relatively severe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health 18. Nutrition Program</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Fund for Housing for the Distressed (Grihayan Tahabil)</td>
<td>1. Mitigating housing problem of the homeless, poor and other low income groups</td>
<td>1. Rural poor, low income and homeless family 2. Households affected by natural disaster and fire 3. Households capable of paying 5% flat interest rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Areas 20. Allowances to the Widowed, Deserted, and Destitute women</td>
<td>1. Minimizing the problems faced by distressed women</td>
<td>1. Women either widowed, deserted, or destitute 2. The number of beneficiaries is identified on the basis of the category of Union.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Honorarium Program for the Insolvent Freedom Fighters</td>
<td>1. Livelihood support to the poor Freedom Fighters through cash transfers</td>
<td>1. Freedom Fighter’s identity verifiable in cross section of references 2. Freedom Fighters with income less than Tk. 6000 per year 3. Disabled or partially disabled or landless or unemployed of none in the family to depend upon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Fund for Rehabilitation of Acid Burnt Women and the Physically Handicapped</td>
<td>1. Assisting acid burnt women and disabled through provisioning of interest free credit and skill training 2. Creating opportunities for acid burnt and disabled women for income generating activities 3. Raising social awareness</td>
<td>1. Installation of facilities generally based upon case</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
23. Old Age Allowances
1. Livelihood support to the elderly poor
   1. At least 65 year of age
   2. Income equal to Tk. 2000 or less
   3. Must have worked in formal sector
   4. Number of beneficiaries is determined on the basis of category of union
   5. Fifty (50) percent of the beneficiaries are women and the other fifty (50) percent are men

24. Appropriate Resources for Improving Street Children’s Environment (ARISE)
1. Developing most vulnerable children (floating and homeless)
   1. Street children with or without family

25. Allowance for Retarded Disabled Persons
1. Providing subsistence allowance to fully retarded persons
   1. People who are mentally or physically challenged/handicapped

Source: GoB/ UNDP, 2006.

However, in the discussion that follows, the details about VGD, VGF and FFW programs are presented along with objectives, program strategies, selection criterion, basic requirements and other relevant information of them.

12. Vulnerable Group Development (VGD)

Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) program in Bangladesh is a large-scale program of resource transfers and development interventions targeted at the poorest women, which has been in place since 1974 (Hossain, 2007). The government of Bangladesh implements this project with support from the food aid donors including the WFP, Australia, Canada, Germany, France and the European Union. The project began as a relief program in November 1975 under the name of Vulnerable Groups Feeding (VGF) with an initial focus on providing food support to destitute women for a two-year period. In its initial form, the main input of the program was wheat grain provided by the WFP, distributed locally to selected beneficiaries by local government representatives.

The program was subsequently oriented towards development and renamed Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) in the mid-1980s. In the early 1980s, the then VGF program underwent a reorientation towards more developmental goals. After a period of piloting a number of different approaches, by the mid-1980s the program was delivering a package
of development inputs through NGO partners. Reviews carried out in the 1990s and 2000s confirmed that the program was effective, both in terms of targeting extremely poor women and in helping many of them that makes its transition from receiving relief to more sustainable and mainstream development activities such as micro-credit program membership. The new objective was to increase self-reliance of the most disadvantaged women. The government however, reintroduced the VGF in 1997 as a separate project. Within the framework of a new ‘Strengthening Institutions for Food Assisted Development’ (SIFAD) project, the government transferred the management of the VGD from the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief to the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs. Since 2000s, the program has been reaching between 400,000 and 500,000 women in each program cycle of 18 months, having gradually scaled up from the 1990s. If the phenomenon of repeated participation is ignored, a rough estimate of the total numbers of women reached through this program would be around 2.5 million. It is the largest program of its kind exclusively targeting poor women (Ahmed et al., 2004).

According to the Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping system, VGD is a national program spread across 480 Upazilas (sub-districts) designated as food insecure regions. At present, the WFP, bilateral donors informally and the Government sharing more or less equally between themselves the responsibility for funding this program. But the WFP and other donors normally target their resources to areas designated ‘very highly’ or ‘highly’ food-insecure, while some portion of the resources put in by Government go to areas which are less food-insecure.

**Objectives of VGD Program**

Generally, the objective of VGD program is to assist ultra-poor rural women with complementary inputs that will improve their nutrition and enhance their livelihoods and self-reliance. The Long-term objectives of VGD program are:

- to make socially aware the rural distressed women;
- to make them capable to earn;
- to help them to come out from extreme poverty level.

However, the short-term specific objectives of VGD program are as follows:

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1 About 1.8 million were to be covered in the 2000-5 period, and Hashemi (2001) claims over one million had been reached in the ten-year period till then.
• to enhance skill through training;
• to form capital through savings;
• to make the poor women capable of earning to earn and creating the opportunity for receiving loan;
• to make them capable of participating in regular development programs of NGOs after the distribution cycle of wheat/pusti atta;
• to make them aware about disaster management, health and nutrition development and other aspects of livelihood.

**VGD Program Strategy**

• 24-month cycle Food aid – each household receives monthly 25kg of fortified atta or 30kg cereals per month.
• Training on life-skills and income earning opportunities.
• Participation in savings program.
• Access to credit.
• Participation in NGO development program.

**Beneficiaries of VGD Program**

The beneficiaries of VGD program are rural women. The rationale for benefiting them is based on the assumption that they:

• are relatively deprived in society;
• have little scope to earn money;
• have limited employment opportunities;
• have limited opportunities of receiving loans;
• have no part in the decision making process;
• the condition of their households is vulnerable.

**Selection Criteria of VGD Beneficiaries**

*Inclusion Criteria:*

• Chronic food insecure, i.e. members of the households who often are deprived of two square meals a day due to insufficient food;
- Household owning no or less than 0.15 acres of land;
- Housing conditions (in terms of material and sanitation facilities) of households are very poor;
- Households survive on casual labor with low income and do not have any other regular sources of earning;
- Household headed by a woman or no adult male income earner in the family.

**Exclusion Criteria:**
- Woman who is not within the specified age group (18 – 49 years);
- Woman who is already a member of other food and/or cash assistance programs;
- Woman who was a VGD cardholder at any time during 2003-2006.

**Selection of Beneficiaries, Implementation and Overall Management of the Program**
- As stated earlier, the overall management of VGD program is entrusted to the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs. Accordingly, the Ministry circulates a Grant Order (GO) before beginning of the next food distribution cycle.
- Selected vulnerable and ultra poor women are to be provided with development package service including skill development training along with food assistance. At Upazila level food is generally allocated on the basis of food safety situation and the number of distressed families within it. In allocating food, base map and subject based map which have been jointly made by the WFP and the concerned division of Planning Commission of Bangladesh government with technical assistance of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics are also taken into consideration.
- VGD cards are also allocated at City Corporation and Municipality areas.
- Overall management and implementation of VGD program at Upazila level are carried out under the supervision of the UNO.
- Upazila Women Affairs Officers under the Department of Women Affairs play key role in the implementation and management of VGD program in 57 Upazilas of 7 Districts (Dinajpur, Thakurgaon, Panchagarh, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Rajshahi and Naogaon).
- In selecting VGD beneficiaries of the rest 423 Upazilas, Project Implementation Officer under the Department of Relief and Rehabilitation plays a substantial role
under the overall supervision of the UNO. Upazila Women Affair Officer provides substantial assistance in selecting beneficiaries.

**Procedure of VGD Women Selection**

The procedure for selecting the VGD women is as follows:

a. Union VGD Committee takes measures for disseminating terms and conditions and issues directions for selecting VGD women in each Ward/village within the Union. In association with ‘small group’ consisting of 3-4 members, the committee clearly informs the selection process of VGD women beneficiaries through a public meeting which is supposed to be held at each ward/village. The committee takes necessary measures for the presence of all people of the village. At the public meeting, necessary information with regard to the operation of VGD program along with the terms and conditions for receiving the benefit and the criteria for selecting the beneficiaries are elucidated. It is expected that through such public meeting a preliminary idea about probable women beneficiaries and their particulars can be obtained. The small group usually consists of the male/female UP members of the concerned ward, a government official working at Union level and a representative of NGO involved in the operation of VGD. In absence of the NGO representative, any other member of the civil society (teacher/social development worker/religious leader) is co opted in that small group.

b. With the active collaboration of the NGO, the male/female members of UP are assigned to prepare the preliminary list of the eligible beneficiaries of VGD. They normally do it by visiting the houses of prospective beneficiaries. It can be mentioned here that the female member of the UP is authorised to select 50 percent of the list of beneficiaries and the remaining 50 percent is prepared by general members. If there exists no associated NGO in any particular Union, officials at Union level are responsible for preparing the 50 percent of the list, while the remaining 50 percent are selected by the members of the UP.

c. After the preparation of the preliminary list, a verification team/committee usually visits the houses of at least 25 percent of listed women and this is done through random selection. To ensure the transparency in the selection process of a particular ward, the task of verification is carried out by the previously formed small group of another ward.
d. After verifying the preliminary list, the Union VGD committee collects the lists of eligible women of all the wards within the Union and prepares a final list for the Union as a whole. It then forwards the final list of the Union to the Upazila VGD committee.

e. Upazila VGD committee can verify the list of VGD women of the Union if any irregularity is found in it. As the chairman of the VGD committee, the UNO can initiate the necessary verification by forming a committee consisting of 2-3 members. In that case, the verification report must be signed by the verification committee.

f. After reviewing the primary list of VGD women of the Union as well as the report of the verification committee, the Upazila VGD committee prepares a complete list of VGD women of the Upazila. As the chairman of the Upazila VGD committee, the UNO endorses the complete or final list.

g. The UNO sends back the final list of VGD women to the concerned Union. The Union preserves the final list in the VGD file and makes necessary arrangements for displaying a copy of the same in the notice board of the UP. At the same time, the UP informs the women included in the list as well as the benefits which they are supposed to receive. In the presence of Upazila Women Affairs Officer/Project Implementation Officer, the UP formally distributes VGD ration cards among selected VGD women. However, prior to do so it announces the venue and the date from where and when the cards will be distributed.

13. Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF)

Vulnerable Group Feeding is a form of gratuitous relief. This program is normally launched during and after disasters like floods, cyclones and other natural calamities and continued until the distressed people remain vulnerable to hunger. It was started in 1975 as relief activities of World Food Programme (WFP) under projects BGD 2226. To identify the targeted population, the WFP carries out a mapping exercise that categorizes Upazilas with respect to food insecurity. The program aimed primarily at feeding those who were most at risk of hunger and malnutrition i.e., the poorest and especially those belonging to female-headed households. As elsewhere, in Bangladesh, it is the extreme poor who are highly vulnerable to food insecurity and this insecurity, no doubt, negates their energy and efforts to escape the severe forms of poverty that they face, especially in slack season. During the mid-1980s, the program was renamed as Vulnerable Group
Development (VGD). The government, however, reintroduced the VGF in 1997 as a separate project.

**Objectives of VGF Program**

*The objectives of the VGF program are as follows:*

a. To ensure food security of distressed and poor people;
b. To help in resisting deterioration of nutrition among distressed and children;
c. To maintain stability in food price;
d. To provide food assistance to the poor people at lean period;
e. To contribute in reducing poverty by temporarily helping in the development of social and economic conditions of beneficiaries.

**Conditions for selecting VGF beneficiaries**

In selecting beneficiaries under VGF program, the following terms and conditions are to be followed:

a. Those males/ females who are day laborer or temporarily laborer or whose income is irregular and/or inadequate or who have no sources of income at all;
b. Those males/ females who are landless or owns less than 0.15 acre of land;
c. Wives of disable husbands/ handicapped;
d. Those Poor males/females who are sufferers due to river erosion/flood/hilly swelling of water/natural disaster;
e. Those males/females who are receiving any benefit under government/non-government organization’s food assistance program including VGD will not be eligible for obtaining VGF card;
f. More than one person of a family will not be eligible to get VGF cards;
g. The government determines the number of VGF cards and the amount of food grains per head for each card.

**Preparing and Preserving VGF Cards**

The following procedure is to be followed in preparing and preserving the VGF card:

a. Upazila Nirbahi Officer issues VGF cards on the basis of list of beneficiaries received from the Union through Union VGF committee.
b. The validity of the card may be for one year from the date of issue.

c. Serial number is to be maintained in the VGF card according to the code of District/Upazila.

d. Chief Executive Officer of City Corporation/ Chairman of Paurashava/ Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Upazila is authorized to sign these cards.

e. Cards are not transferable. Beneficiaries are responsible to preserve the cards.

f. The list of VGF card holders is to be preserved at the offices of the concerned officers.

Allocation and Distribution of VGF Benefits

The following steps are generally followed in the allocation and distribution of VGF benefits:

1. Ministry of Food and Disaster Management circulates grant order (GO) to the Department of Relief and Rehabilitation informing the per head amount of food grains of VGF beneficiaries and number of Upazila wise VGF cards.

2. The Department of Relief and Rehabilitation handed over the grant order (GO) to Deputy Commissioner of the district mentioning Upazila wise number of VGF cards, amount of food grains and amount of money allocated for transport and incidental costs.

3. Deputy Commissioner allocates food grains and transport and incidental costs in favor of Chief Executive Officer of City Corporation/ Upazila Nirbahi Officer/ Chairman of Paurashava.

4. Deputy Commissioner instructs Upazila Food Controller for circulating Delivery Order (DO) of food grains in favor of chairman of VGF center of Paurashava.

5. Chief Executive Officer of City Corporation/ Upazila Nirbahi Officer is to send letter to Upazila Food Controller for circulating Delivery Order (DO) of food grains in favor of concerned Ward of City Corporation/ chairman of Union VGF center.

6. Upazila Food Controller issues Delivery Order (DO) for food grains to the local food godown for distributing allocated food grains in favor of concerned Ward of City Corporation/ Paurashava/ Union.

7. Food grains allocated for a particular month must be distributed to the beneficiaries during that month.
8. If any incidence of embezzlement in the distribution of food grains is occurred, and is being proved after proper investigation, actions are to be taken against the person(s) responsible for such incidence. The penalty for such incidence is normally the double of price of embezzled food grains. The Deputy Commissioner is authorized to take legal actions in accordance with existing rules and regulations if the penalty for embezzled food grains is not recovered within one month.

14. Food for Work (FFW)
FFW is a government program launched in 1974. It was launched in a situation of acute food shortage in the country when the people, particularly in the greater Rangpur area, were facing starvation due to the high price of food grains and rural unemployment. The immediate objective of the program was to create job opportunities in rural areas and at the same time to ensure the supply and availability of sufficient food grains in the affected areas. The idea was to pay wages to the workers in kind (food grains) instead of cash. The program started with grants from the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United States of America under PL-480. The program proved to be very useful and effective, and the other donor countries and agencies including Canada, Australia, Germany, the Netherlands and EEC provided grants and assistance for its expansion and continuation. It has gradually turned into a large program for the development of rural infrastructure, healthcare facilities and the environment in rural Bangladesh.

FFW is in fact an updated version of the Village-Aid Program (V-Aid), a donor supported initiative which was undertaken in 1952. It formally aimed at enhancing agricultural production through overall development of rural areas. Accordingly, a field worker was appointed in each Union council and entrusted him with the task of raising awareness among the rural people about the program. Local government bodies, however, were not properly involved in the V-Aid activities and as a consequence, the program failed to make any imprint in the development of villages. The program was wound-up in 1962 and as an alternative; the government introduced a new program called the Rural Works Program for the development of rural infrastructure through construction of roads, bridges, culverts and flood protection embankments and the excavation of canals for irrigation.
This program was designed for implementation with the involvement of local government bodies, while the central government provided the technical know-how. Under the program, the food grains, particularly wheat received mainly from the United States, were sold in the local market at a much lower price and the sales proceeds were used for payment of wages to the unskilled labor engaged in the work.

The FFW program has now transformed into an integrated rural development program aiming at the development and maintenance of the rural infrastructure. A consolidated fund for the program has been arranged by pooling together the grants and assistance from different bilateral and multilateral donors including the WFP as well as allocations from the government.

**Objectives of FFW Program**

This program of FFW is initiated and implemented for construction, maintenance, reconstruction and development of rural infrastructure, preservation of the environment and social development. Under this program both food grains and cash money are allocated to the Upazila on the basis of population.

**Operational Procedure of FFW Program**

The responsibility for allocating the fund of FFW program is vested with the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management. Projects undertaken through this program are generally carried out by various agencies and organizations of different ministries and also by some selected NGOs. However, the major agencies which are entrusted with the implementation are the LGED under the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives and Directorate of Afforestation under the Ministry of Forest and Environment. A substantial portion of the allocations under the FFW program is also utilized during natural calamities like floods, cyclones and tidal bores. Most of the projects under the FFW program are carried out mainly during the dry season due to its suitability for undertaking all types of earth works. But the program also remains in effect under the banner of Test Relief (TR) during the rainy season when the opportunities for employment in rural areas are bleak. Projects generally carried out under TR include planting of saplings, repair of school buildings, colleges, mosques and temples and making of bamboo bridges (Rahman, 2008).
The projects of FFW are implemented by the UZP under the overall supervision of the District Steering Committee headed by the D.C. Upazila authority allocates the rice/wheat/cash money for FFW projects to the Unions. The UZP selects and prepares the FFW projects in consultation with the U.P. Chairman. The URIR&MC scrutinizes the projects and recommends them to the District Co-ordination Committee for their approval. After obtaining the approval, the UZP executes the projects in accordance with the circular issued for the purpose.

**Government Circular regarding Rural Infrastructure (FFW-food grains/cash money) Program**

- The resources (food grains/cash money) received under rural infrastructure reconstruction program is allocated to the Upazilas/ Paurashavas on the basis of certain criteria like: 70 percent for population and the rest 30 percent is for area, destituteness and damages due to natural calamity.

- The Ministry of Food and Disaster Management allocates food grains/ cash money to the Department of Relief and Rehabilitation in two or more installments. In addition to normal allocation, the FFW projects are also funded by the Department of Relief and Rehabilitation as block grant to the Deputy Commissioners which is allocated on the basis of destituteness, population and backwardness of the districts. The UP, in its meeting, selects projects on priority basis and recommends them to the URIR&MC within a stipulated period of 10 days. After receiving the list of the projects from unions, the Upazila Project Implementation Officer conducts feasibility study. Alternative proposal of projects may be accepted if any project is identified as technically unfeasible in the feasibility study. The allocation order of food grains/ money of the accepted projects under the program must be issued within April, 30 and their implementation must be completed by May, 31 or the time specified by government.

- District Rural Infrastructure, Reconstruction and Maintenance Coordination Committee reviews and approves all the projects of rural infrastructure reconstruction program prepared at Upazila level and circulates allocation order of food grains/ money against each approved project.
• District Karnadhar Committee reviews progress of the project of rural infrastructure reconstruction program within the district and ensures their proper and timely implementation.

• URIR&MC is responsible for proper utilization of resources, preparation of all the reports and keeping records of received resources. The committee also plays its role in preparing as well as undertaking technical feasibility study of projects and reviews their technical aspects of them during implementation.

• In accordance with circulars and guidelines issued by the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management, UNO performs his/her assigned responsibilities as the chairman of URIR&MC. (S)he has to convene at least one meeting of URIR&MC in each month where all the crucial decisions with regard to rural reconstruction projects are taken place. The PIO is supposed to verify the design and direction of projects and provide necessary suggestions regarding rules and regulations and technical aspects of the projects. He/she is also responsible for providing design sheet and copy of relevant part of circular of the project to the Project Implementation Committee at the Union level. The UNO and PIO are jointly responsible in case of misuse of resources and failure to provide account of project resources. On behalf of UNO, the PIO is liable to ensures proper utilization of projects’ resources and for this purpose, he/ she has to inspect the projects sites quite frequently.

• The Chairman of the Project Implementation Committee (PIC), with the help of project secretary, labor leader and supervisor, maintains the measurement of project activities (mainly the earthworks), prepares and preserves accounts and relevant documents. He/she has to keep the records of all these documents in a systematic manner and is bound to readily present them whenever any government official wants to inspect/verify them. He/she is mainly responsible for the overall implement of the project. The PIC in general and the chairman in particular is accountable to UP through the UP Chairman because it is the UP which has appointed the committee.
4.2. People, Institution and Society: A Socio-Cultural Mapping

As stated earlier, SSN programs are launched with a view to ensure food security among the poor and distressed people of Bangladesh. These programs follow a strict guideline for the sake of transparency and accountability in the delivery of services at grassroots level. The local representatives, government officials and the civil society members/NGO officials act together in selecting the beneficiaries from among a large number of people and distribute food grains to them. However, some deviations of rules and procedures are detected during field investigation in the course of implementing these programs. Prior to present this bleak picture, a demographic and statistical profile of each sampled Upazila is depicted below followed by an overall scenario of socio-cultural conditions of beneficiaries as well as other stakeholders.

15. Statistical Profile of Four Sampled Upazilas

Population

The study has collected relevant statistical information about the three SSN programs of four sampled Upazilas. The total number of population is presented in the following figure:

![Figure 4.1: Population of the Study Areas](source: Field survey, 2008)

16. Number of Card Holders

In two out of three SSN programs the selected distressed people are given cards through which food grains are distributed to them. One of these is VGD program, carried out with the object of assisting ultra-poor rural women with complementary inputs that will
improve their nutrition and enhance their livelihoods and self-reliance. The other program is VGF which is usually in operation during disaster and post–disaster period and continues until the distressed people can recover themselves from poverty and malnourishment. It is found in the course of field investigation that the number of VGD card holders in Fulchhari is less than that of Patgram. But in terms of VGF card holders the number is more in Fulchhari than in Patgram. It indicates that the inhabitants of the former are more vulnerable than the latter in terms of natural disasters. Though Fulchhari has less population than Patgram, it is found that an acute intensity of poverty exists in Fulchhari Upazila as it requires more VGD cards than Patgram. On the other hand, Shibchar, because of its geographical location, is more prone to natural disasters than Singair. It is also larger in terms of population and area than Singair, which justifies more number of VGD and VGF card holders. The number of VGD and VGF cardholders in the four sampled Upazilas is shown in the figure given below:

17. General Information of the Beneficiaries

People of the sampled Upazilas are largely poor and have little, if any, access to food and nutrition. Local elites and educated classes are relatively well off but the majority are poor and they are in a worst condition. The overall economic condition is in a deplorable situation. Whatever their status is, the beneficiaries who receive food grains under the SSN programs are the focal point of this study. Accordingly, the study intends to identify the criteria through which the beneficiaries are selected for obtaining a VGD/VGF card. For this purpose, the age, education, income level and profession of beneficiaries are collected with a view to identifying whether they are really the needy and deserved to be beneficiaries of SSN programs in the sampled Upazilas.
Age: According to the circular of VGD program the beneficiaries’ age should be within the range of 18-49 years. The present study finds that out of 270 respondents/beneficiaries of the four sampled Upazilas there is only one case where a beneficiary is aged below 18 years. But there are as many as 46 (17.04%) beneficiaries who have exceeded the highest age limit i.e., 49 years. Among these 46 card holders, 15 are in Patgram, 9 in Fulchhari, 13 in Shibchar and the rest 9 are in Singair Upazilas. The only girl below the age limit i.e., 16 is found in Patgram Upazila. The following table depicts the situation.

**Table 4.1: Age Limit of the VGD Beneficiaries in Four Sampled Upazilas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age limit</th>
<th>Patgram</th>
<th>Fulchhari</th>
<th>Shibchar</th>
<th>Singair</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-30</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>29.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-49</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>52.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 49</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>17.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2008

Though the above table shows that there is a significant irregularity in selecting beneficiaries in the studied Upazilas, in reality, it is not that substantial as because there are 25 women out of 46 beneficiaries. The rest 21 are male who received benefits from FFW program as they are officially eligible to receive benefit from that program. However, such deviation of age requirements in the VGD program, seemed justified as because almost all of those 25 women beneficiaries were living in a situation of acute poverty and therefore they deserve to be benefited.

Education: The study also covers the education level of the beneficiaries. Out of 270 beneficiaries, 90 respondents were selected randomly from Patgram Upazila and 60 from each of the other three Upazilas. The reason for selecting 90 respondents from Patgram is because of its size and population which is higher compared to other two. Upazilas of Rajshahi division in general, seemed to be economically more vulnerable than those of the Dhaka division. In the field study, most of the beneficiaries i.e., 214 (79.3%) out of 270 were found to be bereft of formal education. In analyzing Upazila-wise beneficiaries, maximum illiteracy was found in Fulchhari where 55 out of 60 beneficiaries representing 91.7% of the beneficiaries were found devoid of literacy. The minimum rate of illiteracy was found in Patgram where 63 out of 90 were illiterate representing 70% of the beneficiaries. In the two other Upazilas i.e., Shibchar and Singair of Dhaka division the rate of illiteracy is 80%. Among all the Upazilas the most dismal picture is found in
Fulchhari where only two are self-literate, two reached up to secondary level and only one passed the SSC. The picture of Shibchar and Singair Upazilas is more or less same, and in Patgram, it is comparatively better than the other three Upazilas where 18 out of 90 respondents are found to have completed primary level and seven are at secondary level education. From this viewpoint, it is assumed that Fulchhari is the most vulnerable in terms of literacy among these four Upazilas which needs an in-depth consideration. In the table below the number and percentage of education level of the respondents are presented:

Table 4.2: Level of Education of the Beneficiaries of Four Upazilas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Upazila</th>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>Self-literate*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patgram</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>70.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulchhari</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>91.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shibchar</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singair</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>79.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2008

Note: *Some respondents are hesitant to disclose details of their education. By self-literate it means the respondents are capable of reading and writing, though they have not received any formal education.

**Level of Income:** As stated earlier, the income level of the beneficiaries is also taken into consideration. The rationale behind this consideration is to identify whether the beneficiaries are eligible for getting relief or assistance through SSN programs. It is stipulated that VGD beneficiaries are drawn from the downtrodden class of the society and the members of their families eke out existence as casual labor with low income and do not have any other regular source of earning. Out of 270 beneficiaries, there are 255 earning households while the rest 15 do not have any earning at all. The number of households is the highest in Fulchhari within the monthly income level of Tk.1000, whereas in case of Tk. 2001-3000 level, the highest number belongs to Patgram. Out of 51 respondents at this income level i.e., Tk. 2001-3000, there are 48 in Patgram, 2 in Singair, 1 in Fulchhari and none in Shibchar. In mid level income group i.e., tk.1001-2000 the respondents are more or less the same in all the Upazilas. At Tk.3001 and above
monthly income level, only 4 respondents are found in Patgram whereas none is found in all the rest Upazilas. The statistics shows that the beneficiaries of Patgram are better off with their monthly income as the income opportunity of them is more than that of their counterparts in other three Upazilas. The following table shows the picture in detail:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly Income</th>
<th>Name of Upazila</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patgram</td>
<td>Fulchhari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-1000 Count</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>68.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1001-2000 Count</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-3000 Count</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>58.5%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3001-Above Count</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Count</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2008

**Profession:** The study has identified the profession of the beneficiaries with a view to examining the fulfillment of the criteria of beneficiaries of the SSN programs. Among the beneficiaries, the number of housewives is highest in Patgram, whereas the number of day laborers is the highest in Fulchhari among the studied Upazilas. Although the number of housewife beneficiaries is highest in Patgram, their level of monthly household income is also the highest since the husbands of those beneficiaries are involved in different wage earning activities. The study finds that the male members of these households are engaged in various activities like extraction of stones from the river and stone-crashing, working as van-puller etc. and these obviously help them to fulfill the daily necessities of these households. The professions of beneficiaries are depicted in the following figure:

**Figure 4.3:** Professions of the Beneficiaries of Four Upazilas

![Professions of the Beneficiaries of Four Upazilas](source: Field Survey, 2008)
18. **General Information of Local Representatives**

Local representatives play the crucial role in selecting beneficiaries of various projects under SSN programs and are directly involved with the distribution of food grains to them. The study investigates socio-economic and cultural conditions of chairmen and members of the UPs of the sampled Upazilas in anticipation to know their organizational capability and managerial skill for the successful execution of SSN programs within their territorial jurisdiction.

**Level of Education of the Chairmen:** The study includes interviews of twelve chairmen from the four sampled Upazilas. It reveals that a significant section of them have completed only the SSC level education and the number of this group constitutes seven. Among the rest, one has completed his secondary education but did not appear at the examination, one HSC and the other three have obtained their graduation. Out of four sampled Upazilas, the respondent UP chairmen under Fulchhari Upazila have been found relatively less educated as two of them passed only SSC and the other one is below the SSC level. On the other hand, the chairmen of Shibchar are found relatively well educated as two of them are graduates and the other one passed SSC. The overall picture of the level of education of UP Chairman, however, is not quite impressive which is, socio-culturally speaking, one among different causes of their being weaker in personality in decision matters of local administration compared with their counterparts – i.e., the career Upazila officials.

**Level of Income of the Chairmen:** Given the sensitivity of asking the income of anyone as well as unreliability of the answers thereof, we have decided to gather information on the level of income of Chairmen only if they are spontaneously willing to respond. Accordingly, the study could manage to collect information of ten out of twelve chairmen as two other chairmen hesitated to disclose their income. However, their income level reveals that the chairmen of Fulchhari Upazila belonged to the relatively in lower income group and that of Shibchar Upazila are in the higher income range as can be seen in the table given below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.5: Level of Monthly Income of the UP Chairmen of Four Upazilas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level of Monthly Income</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3000-6000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9001-12000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above table reveals that the overall income level of elected representatives is relatively better. They usually come from the ‘elite’ circle of the society and do not represent the mass people. Consequently, the selection of pro-poor development projects and related decision making affairs in the overall management of those projects on their part are likely to be tilted towards better-off people than the most downtrodden.

**Work Experience of the Chairmen:** A mixed impression transpires from the study regarding the extent to which the local leaders are experienced in the affairs of organization and management including the implementation of development projects and SSN programs in the four sampled Upazilas. Out of twelve, one from Shibchar Upazila was found to be experienced for more than 30 years and another in Fulchhari experienced for 25 years in their role as the as local representatives. In the 15 years experienced group, there is one in Patgram and, in the 10- year group, out of three, each one of them from Upazilas of Patgram, Fulchhari and Singair. Figure 4.4 delineates the experience of chairmen of the four sampled Upazilas:
General Information of the Members

Like chairmen, members of the UPs also play the key role in selecting SSN beneficiaries and distributing food grains to them under the prescribed rules. Their socio-economic condition is also a critical factor in assessing their performance. The study was scheduled to conduct interview of thirty-six members from four Upazilas – six males and three females from each. However, interview of a total thirty-eight members were taken instead. Their level of education, monthly income and working experience were collected to find out an overall picture of the socio-cultural condition of them.

Level of Income of the Members: In terms of monthly income of the UP members of the sampled Upazilas, the study finds five categories ranging from Tk. 1000 to Tk. 9000 and above. Out of thirty eight respondents from the Upazilas, eighteen members (47.3%) earn within the range of Tk. 5001 and Tk. 7000 per month. Besides, ten (26.3%) are found within the range of Tk. 7001 and Tk. 9000 and six are in Tk. 3001- Tk. 5000. Two members are found to earn more than Tk. 9000 and the rest two earn within the range of Tk. 1000- Tk. 3000. In the course of field investigation, most of the respondents gave the impression that the monthly income below Tk. 3000 was at the subsistence level, Tk. 5001-Tk. 7000 at the mid income level and Tk. 9000 and above propelled one at the upper income level. The following table reveals that most of the members are in the mid level income group while, more or less, the same percentage is found both at below subsistence and upper income levels:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Monthly Income</th>
<th>Name of Upazila</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1000-3000</td>
<td>Patgram, Fulchhari, Shibchar, Singair</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3001-5000</td>
<td>Patgram, Fulchhari, Shibchar, Singair</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5001-7000</td>
<td>Patgram, Fulchhari, Shibchar, Singair</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7001-9000</td>
<td>Patgram, Fulchhari, Shibchar, Singair</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9000+</td>
<td>Patgram, Fulchhari, Shibchar, Singair</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Patgram, Fulchhari, Shibchar, Singair</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2008
Level of Education of the Members: Seven educational tiers could be discerned among the UP members: illiterate, self-literate, primary, secondary, SSC, HSC and Graduation. All these levels are self-explanatory. Out of thirty-eight respondents, majority (19) belonged to the secondary school level. Two persons were found to be completely illiterate. There were three graduate members. Among the rest, eight respondents claimed completion of their SSC. The following table gives an impression of the educational attainment of respondent UP members of the sampled Upazilas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Name of Upazila</th>
<th>Patgram</th>
<th>Fulchhari</th>
<th>Shibchar</th>
<th>Singair</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-literate</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary level</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary level</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSC</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSC</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation/ Honors</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Work Experience of the Members: Work experience of the members was reviewed with a view to getting information whether the representative is capable enough to handle the SSN programs in accordance with the prescribed rules and regulations. The following figure shows that out of thirty-eight UP members, eight from each of the two Upazilas – Fulchhari and Singair – had experienced of five years, implying that they were local representatives for the first time and one from each of them had experience for ten years. On the other hand, in Shibchar, seven had five-year experience while one was with ten years and still another with twenty years of experience. In Patgram Upazila, three were with experience of five years, another three with ten years, two were of fifteen years and the rest one was with more than thirty years experience as a local public representatives.
19. General Information of Civil Society Members

The study intends to explore the level of transparency and accountability in service delivery of the SSN programs implemented mainly by the local representatives. With this objective, it conducts interview of some of the civil society members of the studied Upazilas considering them as the key informants to know the actual picture in the localities. However, the study covers interview of 35 civil society members from four Upazilas. The following table depicts the categorization of civil society members:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Profession</th>
<th>Patgram</th>
<th>Fulchhari</th>
<th>Shibchar</th>
<th>Singair</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imam of Mosque</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2008

The table shows that there are three categories of civil society members who are considered to be the conscious citizenry of the society. However, their level of education and income are taken into consideration to get an idea about their awareness and involvement with the programs.

Level of Education of Civil Society Members: Level of education of any person seems to reflect his level of consciousness. Considering this view as the hub of our argument, the study embraces three categories of professionals among the civil society members i.e., businessmen, teachers and imams of mosques. Among these people, the businessmen are found comparatively less educated in the sampled Upazilas. Out of twelve responded businessmen, one is illiterate, one passed only primary level, five completed secondary
level, three passed SSC and among the rest two one is found masters degree holder and another is madrasah educated graduate. Out of 13 teachers, three are found SSC, HSC and diploma passed respectively, four completed graduation, five masters and the rest one is madrasah educated. On the other hand, out of ten imams, five completed SSC and one is a graduate. The other three are master’s degree holder and the rest one obtained hifj-e-Quran. The following figure depicts the level of education of the professionals:

Figure 4.6: Level of Education of the Civil Society members

Source: Field Survey, 2008

Level of Income of the Civil Society Members: The income analysis of civil society members reveals that all the businessmen and the imams’ income level is within the range of Tk. 2000 and Tk. 7000. Four teachers are also found in this level and eight of them are in the range of Tk. 7001- Tk. 12000 per month. One of the respondent teachers’ monthly income is more than Tk. 12000. The following table shows the level of income of the civil society respondents:

Table 4.9: Income level of the Civil Society members of Four Upazila

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income level</th>
<th>Business</th>
<th>Teaching</th>
<th>Imam of Masjid</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000-7000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7001-12000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12001- above</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2008

SSN programs in Bangladesh are introduced to ensure the participation of people from all strata of the society. Though the programs are conducted directly by the local representatives, the number of local level officials and civil society members are tagged with different committees of the programs to perform the activities in a transparent and
accountable manner. With this point of view, the study has analyzed the information collected from the government officials as well as civil society members along with the beneficiaries and local representatives. The general information especially education, income and work experience of government officials is not analyzed here because of the fact that the relevant information of them is supposed to be static as they are recruited through certain rules and regulations which are applicable to all of them. However, a brief account of them can be shown by the following table that illustrates a categorically divided thirty two government officials who are interviewed for the purpose of the study:

Table 4.10: Number of Government Officials interviewed in the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Respondents</th>
<th>Name of Upazila</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patgram</td>
<td>Fulchhari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UWAO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAEO</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UFC</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USWO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URDO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UEO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UFO</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2008

20. **People’s Contact with Local Administration**

While trying to trace how far people are in contact with the local administration, it is observed that people are in most cases less interested to maintain a close contact with local government offices. This is evident in most of the sampled Upazilas. The general tendency of the people is to maintain rather a good communication with elected UP Chairman and Members. Besides, among different local government offices, they frequently visit Upazila Land office. On the other hand, In Patgram, people’s contact with Agriculture office and Women Affairs office is more visible than other offices of Upazila administration. This is more or less true in the case of Fulchhari Upazila. This testifies that although people are less interested to visit offices of Upazila administration, they are, however, tend to maintain a good relation with Women Affairs officer, Youth Development officer and BRDB officers. However, People of Fulchhari Upazila are found to maintain a good functional relation with the Ups. In general, people at grass roots level are more dependent on Ups than on Upazila administration. The reason may
be that the UP is an elected body and the people who hold the positions in this body are quite acquainted with the mass at large, while Upazila administration is run by career officials. Moreover, it is generally observed that people at all sampled Upazilas are found to have more interactions with land offices. The reason is obvious: they have to rely on Land and Registry offices to maintain their ownership as well as to settle land disputes, if there are any. On the other hand, the people of Singair Upazila are found to have relatively better contact with Upazila administration as the Upazila is being near to capital Dhaka and having better infrastructure facilities compared with other three Upazilas. Our field investigation also reveals that people at Singair are more conscious than their counterparts of the other sampled areas and thus have relatively easier access to both Upazila administration and UP. From our findings, it becomes clear that the general people feel free to maintain contact with elected officials than career officials.

One general observation may be drawn that lack of education and acquaintance make people reluctant to be in contact with local government offices. They hesitate to seek help and services from these offices. It is observed in the field survey that local government officers have a kind of sense of elitism. This elite class, majority of whom are not originally ‘local’ has a good tie with local elite like UP Chairman and Members, School teachers, Madrasah Principals and political leaders. Now, if we consider local government officers as ‘external’ elite (because they come from different place) and local rich and influential people as ‘internal’ elite, then both elite classes are found to have good relations while the general people are ignored. Thus, the space of general people is squeezed at the expense of internal and external elite. Moreover, they virtually become Masters, and do not work as Servants for local general people. However, officers are not solely blamable as they remain exhaustively busy and cannot interact with people frequently. The only occasion that they come in contact with general people is during visits/inspections of different development projects and distribution of benefits under various programs.

From the above analysis it seems clear that the SSN programs in Bangladesh are supposed to be operationalised in a transparent and accountable way so that the benefits really percolate down to the lower strata of the people – who need those most. Taken into consideration of this objective, the rules and procedures of selecting beneficiaries and distributing benefits to them have been initiated with a view to ensuring participation
from all walks of life, especially from those for whom these programs are designed. It is apparent in the stated rules and procedures that the government officials, civil society members and local representatives are supposed to be worked together in selecting SSN beneficiaries. In an attempt to find out whether this selection is made in accordance with rules and procedures or in other words the benefits are distributed to the real beneficiaries, socio-economic condition of beneficiaries of the sampled Upazilas is investigated along with the stakeholders who are involved in the execution of these programs. In doing so, age, education, level of income of them and their interaction with the relevant officials (both elected and career) are explored with statistical analysis.
5. Major Findings

The chapter deals with the key findings of the study. These findings have been categorized into four aspects i.e., the governance aspect, program aspect, political aspect and socio-cultural aspect that illustrate the data collected during field investigation from four types of respondents i.e., the direct beneficiaries, local representatives, local government officers and the civil society members of four sampled Upazilas.

5.1 The Governance Aspect

The governance aspect of the study is explained with the information collected through several types of questions interviewed to different categories of respondents of the sampled Upazilas. This aspect intends to explore the SSN programs, irrespective of the fact of carrying them out in accordance with prescribed rules and regulations or in utter disregard of those rules.

5.1.1 Lack of Coordination in Upazila Administration

All the respondent UNOs and PIOs of Upazila administration are found relatively skilled in discharging their duties and responsibilities. Despite their busy schedule, they usually perform their assigned duties as per rules. Nevertheless, their accountability to their reporting authority i.e., Deputy Commissioner may not be systematically ensured regarding the SSN programs. It is generally assumed that there is a lack of well-orchestrated coordination between different tiers of local government from Ministries to Union Parishads. In the course of field investigation, it is observed that there is a lack of coordination among different officials working in different capacities at the Upazila level. The jurisdiction and authority of UNO’s seem to be overwhelmingly centralized. There is a number of government officials tagged with the SSN programs working at Upazila level, but their job descriptions relating to these programs are not clearly defined. Besides, the workloads of different Upazila officials are quite heterogeneous and probably due to this reason there exist a general lack of coordination and cooperation among different officials. In most cases, Upazila officials virtually work according to the dictations of UNO in the VGD, VGF and FFW programs.

21. Irregularity of Regular Monthly Meetings

One of the key mechanisms to ensure accountability of concerned elected and career officials is the formal arrangement of regular monthly meeting to discuss issues of SSN
programs being operated within their respective jurisdiction, monitor the progress of projects and programs, and trace out problems for corrective and affirmative actions. At all levels – District, Upazila and Union – meetings of different committees are often not held regularly. This is particularly true in case of committees involved at Upazila and Union levels.

**Upazila level:** At the Upazila level, the common trend is to discuss issues of different committees at the meetings of monthly Development Coordination Committee. But, in reality, as different committees are supposed to perform specific responsibilities, nothing can be discussed in detail in the monthly meetings of Coordination Committee leading it a mere maintenance of formality. The study has found that the supposedly meetings of Upazila VGD, VGF and URIR&M Committees are not held regularly as per rules. Usually, most of the issues of these three programs are discussed in Upazila Development Coordination Committee. Thus, the accountability in relation to the selection of these three programs and their implementation through the formation and operation of committees appears to be anything, but purposive or productive.

While interviewing UNOs, three, out of four, responded that the monthly meeting of URIR&M Committee is held regularly, but the remaining one opined that the meeting is held only occasions warrant it. In addition, as far as the meetings of Upazila VGF Committee are concerned, three UNOs responded that the meeting of Upazila VGF Committee is held once in a month and one UNO – while interviewing about the end of the month – it was stated that the meeting of the committee was yet to be held. Clarifying their position, the UNOs have candidly admitted that the meetings of all the committees could not be held separately. Rather they preferred to arrange specific times to discuss the issues of several committees in the monthly meeting of Development Coordination Committee. On the other hand, all the PIOs of the sampled Upazilas have expressed in affirmative that the meetings of the above committee is held once in a month. However, the study has got the actual information from other government officials working in different capacities of Upazilas who admitted that the only meeting of Upazila Development Coordination Committee is held once in a month and the discussions of all the committees are normally conducted there. Several officials admitted that they hardly have to play any active role and just remain present without any fruitful participation. The following figure illustrates opinion of Upazila officials other than the UNO and the PIO. It transpires from the graph that out of 24 officials 17 have informed that the issues of
different committees are discussed in the monthly meeting of development Coordination Committee – the most important committee at Upazila level.

The graph shows that the issues of SSN programs which are quite common in the Upazilas are mostly discussed in the Upazila Development Coordination Committee (UDCC) meeting represented in the blue bar whereas only in Patgram represented as green bar indicates that issues of SSN programs are discussed in the separate VGD, VGF or FFW committees in that Upazila. However, the brown bar indicates the respondents are not aware of the regulation of the official monthly meeting of SSN programs at Upazila level and thus it shows as missing response.

**Union level:** As stated earlier that there are some sub-committees of all the Upazila level committees of several SSN programs in the Union level. It is the assigned duty of all these sub-committees to submit their monthly progress report to the Upazila level committees. While interviewing the UNOs of sampled Upazila, two out of four opined that, the monthly meeting of IG-VGD Sub-committee is not regularly held and its progress report is also not submitted on time by UNO to Upazila VGD Committee. On the other hand, only one UNO replied in the positive. Interestingly as usual, one UNO sidestepped the question and said that the above mentioned issues are discussed in the monthly coordination meeting of the Upazila Development Coordination Committee. In the context of meeting of the union VGD committees, two UNOs informed that the Committee submits its monthly progress report regularly on time while rest two replied in
the negative which indicated a clear doubt about the imitation of rules and regulations about the activities of Union VGD Committee.

In case of PICs monthly meeting, the situation is also not different. While interviewing the UP Members, only nine out of thirty eight responded that the monthly meeting of this committee is arranged regularly while twelve other members have expressed that the meeting is not arranged regularly and the rest seventeen have admitted that the meeting is held but on irregular basis. The following table depicts their opinion:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Upazila</th>
<th>Monthly Meeting of PIC</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patgram</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulchhari</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shibchar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singair</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2008

22. Lack of Seriousness in Project Preparation and Selection

One of the basic shortcomings of FFW projects is that it is implemented and managed rather half-heartedly and it lacks due seriousness or attention. Starting right from the identification of the project to that of its completion, a variety of irregularities can be traced from the field investigation. The supposed feasibility study based on priority needs of the locality of the project is also not carried out properly. For this, the Upazila or Union alone is not solely responsible. The Ministries also seem appear responsible for delaying the whole process as the allocation for projects are mostly made at the last time and the line of direction begin from Ministries to DC office to Upazila office and finally to UP office. Moreover, the UP office is given at times, only one day or two to conceive, prepare and submit project proposals. By this way, all projects are often approved in haste, without any proper verification and feasibility study. The following table shows that the number of project proposals and approved projects are almost identical which indicates the above assertion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues/Factors</th>
<th>Financial Year</th>
<th>Patgram</th>
<th>Fulchhari</th>
<th>Singair</th>
<th>Shibchar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of project proposals received by URIR&amp;M Committee</td>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the above table it transpires that in most cases, project proposals are prepared more on ad-hoc basis, relying on rule of thumbs without any proper assessment of priority or need. The project Chairman, in absence of any of proper monitoring, at times selects sites that were selected for some earlier projects. This was experienced both in Shibchar and in Singair Upazilas. In Shibchar Upazila, in Mud Flat projects under FFW program, it was found that the PIC chairman did not undertake any actual task and fell back upon the left overs of earlier works and managed to scrap some earth from the surface to give the impression that the task was accomplished. In Shibchar Upazila, the UP chairmen were found to have submitted, in the garb of a new project proposal to the UNO office which in reality, was almost a finished old one, requiring only a small amount of petty work for completion. All these remind one of the fable of fox and the crocodile where the fox tries to befool the croc by presenting the same lone surviving specimen to assure presence of all of the members. Needless to say, such type of reselling of almost finished projects as new one to milk another round of fund is nothing but to blatant misappropriation of public money. This is not the end of the story anyway. Sometimes, the local representatives have the tendency to take such projects which are adjacent to the river and therefore, prone to erosion – an incident which can conveniently be used later to explain non-existence of the project, if challenged at any time at all. It is found in Shibchar Upazila that some projects are intentionally taken in low landed areas, which generally go under water as floods or rainy seasons appear. Such questionable projects are also pleaded for reconstruction. In the course of field investigation, about 17% of the civil society members of the four Sampled Upazilas alleged that the frequent repetition of such old projects in a new version on this plea or that are but blatant subterfuge for outright theft / graft.
Table 5.3: **Civil Society Members’ on Repeating Previous Projects**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Upazila</th>
<th>Repeating previous project</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patgram</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulchhari</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shibchar</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singair</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total No. &amp; %</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2008

23. **Lack of Monitoring in Development Projects**

It cannot be vouched that monitoring of FFW projects is always ensured. Sometimes PIO endorses the bill of FFW project before the actual task is completed. While interviewing different government officials, they candidly admitted this fact. According to government directives, projects under FFW program approved by the URIRM Committee must be completed before 31st May of each financial year. If any project cannot be completed within the stipulated time, unutilized food grains/money must be returned immediately to the government. But in practice, not a single instance of such refund was found in any of the four sampled Upazilas. Such meticulous completion of all projects in all the Upazilas in time is too good to be true and smacks of an unholy nexus between PIOs and Union Chairman/PIC. In reality, many of the projects, officially sown completed are found incomplete well beyond the cut-off date. While interviewing the PIC Chairmen, it was stated that they had to discharge all the responsibilities by themselves, starting from hiring of labors in FFW projects to maintaining accounts and records of completion of the project. At the same time, as the Chairmen of the project, they had to take care of progress of the project and complete it within the time–frame decided by the project committee. In many cases, the PIC Chairmen complained that the PIO did not carry out his duty of monitoring progress of a project to match the disbursement schedule nor could make time to verify its completion report within any reasonable period of time and it is not uncommon to find that PIOs are to be pacified through pecuniary benefits for obtaining requisite approval for projects within their jurisdiction. The PIC Chairman, in turn, recovers the ‘pacification money by completing only 60 to 70 percent of the work, and showing it to be completed on paper, and appropriates the last installment of the project money by obtaining signature from the PIO, though the standing instructions forbids him not to put signature recommending disbursement of the last installment unless he is personally certain about actual full completion of the project. (Ministry of Food and
Disaster Management, 2007:10). It is also found that District RIRMC Committee hardly reviews the progress of project implementation. Actually, the issue of reviewing progress of project implementation is discussed at the meeting of District Development Coordination Committee and the District RIRMC Committee occasionally inspects project area and seldom recommends about its improvement.

5.1.5 Lack of Awareness of Government Officials about SSN Committees

Most of the government officials who are officially engaged as Members of Upazila VGD, VGF or RIR&M Committees are found indifferent to their assigned duties and responsibilities. It is also found that these career officials are also reluctant to interact with elected officials, while a close interaction and consultation between these two categories of officials is crucially important for the successful execution of the projects in question.

24. Lack of Supervision of Upazila Administration in Selecting VGD and VGF Beneficiaries

Upazila administration under the leadership of the UNO is found to play its due role in selecting beneficiaries for VGD and VGF programs, but not to the desired extent. The span of supervision of Upazila administration should be visible at the Union level in order to ensure that the benefits are siphoned off to target people. The apparent indifference on the part of Upazila administration was visible in the course of field investigation as twenty two out of thirty five civil society members have argued that in the absence of Upazila administration, the UP quite often manipulates the selection of VGD beneficiaries. The following chart illustrates their assertion regarding such manipulation:

**Figure 5.2: Civil Society Members Opinion on Ups Manipulation in VGD Selection**

![Figure 5.2: Civil Society Members Opinion on Ups Manipulation in VGD Selection](source: Field Survey, 2008)
However, the selection of VGF beneficiaries is comparatively more transparent according to the respondents among beneficiaries, the details of which can be seen in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fairness in VGF selection</th>
<th>Name of Upazila</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patgram</td>
<td>Fulchhari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field survey, 2008

The above table shows that 84.3% respondents opined positively about fairness of VGF beneficiaries’ selection. According to the respondents, one of the main reasons for this fairness in selecting the beneficiaries of the VGF program is the presence and surveillance of army personnel who are at present deployed at field level.

5.1.7 Lack of Well-defined Job Specification in Upazila Administration

The workload and official responsibilities of different government officials at Upazila level are not similar. Some officials like UNO, PIO, UEO and UAO are overburdened with responsibilities and duties of their respective offices while some others are found relatively relaxed. A prudent job description and job specification of Upazila administration may turn the whole system electrified, vibrant and effective. Some Upazila officials like Upazila Youth Development officer, Upazila Fisheries officer, Upazila Livestock officer, Upazila Social Works Officer, Upazila Cooperatives officer, Upazila Statistics officer etc are found to have less work-load. Because of their nature of work, the workload of these officials seems to be relatively lesser than their counterparts like UNO and PIO. It can be recommended in the light of these findings that the existing pool of workers can shoulder more than one portfolio or sector like youth or fisheries development. As one Upazila Cooperative officer bitterly commented that he has nothing to do in VGD program, except remaining a silent observer. But in these programs, according to him, he can contribute a lot by exercising a supervisory role.

5.1.8 Overburdened Responsibilities of UNO
UNOs are usually ex-officio Chairpersons for a plethora of Committees at the Upazila level which reportedly number 45, with as many as thirty two within the Upazila. They also act as ex-officio members of a number of committees beyond the Upazilas like the district committees. Further, as the chief executive of Upazila administration, he has to involve either as patron or advisor of a number of benevolent organizations as well as chairman of management committees of schools/colleges or madrasahs within the Upazila. After discharging the assigned duties in Upazila administration, it seems apparently impossible for the UNOs to manage all the activities in an effective manner. Although in a lesser degree, similar conclusion can be drawn in case of PIOs. However, a well- thought out reshuffle in the duties and responsibilities of these two crucially important portfolios of Upazila administration by engaging their professional and technical counterparts can contribute a substantial imprint in planning and implementation activities of development projects.

5.1.9 Less Adherence to Administrative Procedures

A variety of irregularities are found in all the sampled Upazilas. For example, in Shibchar Upazila the resolution is not accurately adhered in FFW and KABITA projects and Upazila administration is also found less interested in monitoring the progress of the projects. The officials responsible for monitoring the progress seldom inspect the project sites. It is also found in Fulchhari that some women who get Older allowance or Widow allowance have obtained VGD card as well which is contrary to the existing policy of the government. Besides, the standard procedure for selecting VGD women through the public meetings is avoided in most of the Upazilas though there exists a clear instruction of the government to select VGD women in an open public meeting (Ministry of Women Affairs, 2007-08:9). The following table clearly illustrates the deviation of this instruction:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection of Women Beneficiaries</th>
<th>Name of Upazila (Responses in percentage)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patgram</td>
<td>Fulchhari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Upazila Official</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By UP Chairman</td>
<td>91.21</td>
<td>42.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By NGO Officials</td>
<td>2.198</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Public Meetings</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>6.593</td>
<td>8.264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2008

The above table shows that in Fulchhari, less than two percent respondents among the
beneficiaries admit that VGD women are selected in public meetings. On the other hand, as many as 52% respondents opined that VGD women are selected by the UP Chairmen alone. Some of them even states that the chairman of their respective Union quite often did not bother to convene the public meeting because of his overconfidence in maneuvering the situation.

The question of accountability seems to be blurred in the VGF program. It is specified in the VGF Program Implementation Manual that for any misappropriation or embezzlement of VGF food grains the perpetrator will be given a one month notice to repay the same amount of food grains failing of which, the DC can proceed for a legal action against the defaulter. But, it looks that the provision for giving one month notice to the perpetrator has no justification and may encourage such a crime. It is also not mentioned nor is even clear of what kind of punishment is to be conferred for such a crime. Moreover, the instances of lodging any such legal action by the DC against the perpetrator are rare in the real world situation.

25. Lack of Transparency in SSN Programs

There is a clear lack of transparency in different SSN programs. For example, the list of VGF beneficiaries is supposed to be available in the UP offices. But in Fulchhari, Shibchar and Singair Upazilas, it is not even found. Besides, in case of projects launched under FFW program, it is officially stated that for each and every project there should have a signboard displayed in the premises of projects sites. But in Patgram, Fulchhari and Singair Upazilas, any such signboard is not noticed at all. However, the evidence of displaying such signboard is visible in Shibchar Upazila. While interviewing the concerned officials, they simply stated that in case of little allocated money and short-term project they normally did not feel the necessity for displaying such signboard. On this particular issue, out of four PIC Chairmen, two have answered affirmatively while the rest two failed to provide any logical explanation. On the other hand, the failure on their part especially in case of VGF list proves lack of transparency in their activities. Figure 5.3 depicts the opinion of beneficiaries on manifestation of VGF list:
5.1.11 Lack of Training

For the improvement of skill and efficiency of officials responsible for development projects, there is no alternative to training. But, unfortunately the officials of Upazila administration are found relatively under trained in discharging their duties in different SSN programs. In course of interviewing relevant Upazila officials, it is found that in some cases they are not well aware of their assigned tasks and rules and regulations thereof. The officials who are tagged with the VGD, VGF or FFW programs in the Upazila are not adequately trained for carrying out the activities of their respective assignments. Such shortfall on their part often creates opportunities for misappropriation or mismanagement in the overall execution of SSN programs by the vested quarters.

5.2. The Program Aspect

The findings under the program aspect focus on getting actual picture as to whether the policies and programs of VGD, VGF or FFW have any loopholes that can possibly provide avenues for blurring transparency and accountability at the delivery end.

26. Lack of Comprehensive Policy

There is a lack of well defined policy of the legal and procedural aspects of SSN programs. It is of common knowledge that all districts of Bangladesh are not affected and vulnerable to a similar extent. Privileges and vulnerabilities vary from place to place. So, government should have a comprehensive policy of how much allocations should be given to which Upazila. But the policy of the government in this context is not quite clear. Even, a national daily reports that the division-wise distribution of SSN benefits is not
equitable. According to the report, 52 percent people in Barisal live below the poverty line, 50.2 percent in Rajshahi and 45.7 percent in Khulna. But Barisal receives only 14.8 percent of the SSN funds while in case of Rajshahi and Khulna these are 22.9 percent 15 percent respectively. On the other hand, in Sylhet where 39% people live below the poverty line receives 40.8 percent of the SSN funds. Dhaka and Chittagong, where 32 and 34 percent people live below the poverty line, receive 19.2 percent and 27.5 percent of the funds respectively. The report further says that during 2000-2005, the average poverty rate reduced to 50 percent from 53 percent in the western region comprising Barisal, Khulna and Rajshahi while it went down to 33 percent from 46 percent in the eastern part comprising Sylhet, Dhaka and Chittagong (The Daily Star, 31 August 2008).

However, it is found in this study that the same kind of discrimination exists in the sampled four Upazilas. In the following table, the amount of resources (food grains/money) allocated under FFW Program in four sampled Upazilas in different fiscal years is presented:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.6: Allocation in FFW Program in Four Sampled Upazilas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Issues</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allocated Food grains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actually Distributed Food grains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allocated Money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actually Distributed Money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2008 * Data not available in the concerned office.

The first impression one can develop from the above table is that information and data are not regularly updated at the Upazila level. What policy the government in distributing SSN allocations for the Upazila follows is also not clear. If we look into the issue of landlessness for instance, it would transpire that among four sampled Upazilas, 9,612 landless households are found at Patgram and 7,697 and 6,640 landless households are at Fulchhari and Shibchar respectively. If we consider ‘landlessness’ to be one major criterion in distributing SSN allocations, in that case Patgram should get the top priority, while Fulchhari and Shibchar should be considered at second and third places. But in the aforementioned table, it can be seen that in 2007-08, Patgram received Tk.21,00,000 as
allocated money, while Fulchhari and Shibchar received Tk.16,00,000 and Tk.27,27,000 respectively. Here, it looks that the third priority becomes the first priority. A general conclusion may be drawn from the above picture that the principle of equity is not maintained by the government in its effort to reduce poverty.

27. Persistence of Corruption

Different forms of corruption are found in the management and distribution of SSN programs. Even some government officials candidly admit that corruption prevails in all the three programs. However, the magnitude and level of corruption varies from one program to another. Among the three programs, FFW is replete with most irregularities and VGD has moderate irregularities while the VGF program is running with least irregularities. In this context, many respondents asserted that the presence of Army is effective in minimizing the extent of corruption, though some of them believe that the existence of Army in monitoring of these programs, especially VGF program, cannot be a permanent solution. Corruption exists in different forms in SSN programs. In the course of field investigation, it is found that in some cases the UP Chairmen and Members are often compelled to ‘pacify’ and ‘satisfy’ Upazila officials who are tagged with these programs, through some form of benefits to. This trend of corruption, some respondents remarked, may be minimized by introducing travel allowance for the ‘tag’ officers. Presently, these officials are not entitled to any kind of travel or incidental allowance even though they are asked to inspect project sites quite frequently. In addition, it is also found that in getting the approval of projects under FFW program, the PIC chairmen have to pay a certain portion of allotted fund to the PIO. Similar situation prevails in the distribution of VGD cards. During field investigation, it is gathered from a few really deserving potential VGD beneficiaries that as they could not afford to give money, they are consequently deprived of VGD cards. Among civil society members interviewed in the sampled Upazilas, 71.4% respondents opined that VGD card is distributed in exchange of money. Even some VGD beneficiaries also remarked that irregularities persist in the program though they do not feel free to admit it. However, according to the civil society members, the scenario of such irregularities is shown in the following table:

Table 5.7: Civil Society Members Opinion on Irregularities in VGD Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. and % of respondents</th>
<th>Name of Upazila</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patgram</td>
<td>Fulchhari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>88.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the above table, it can be seen that irregularities are acute in Fulchhari than in other sampled Upazilas. It is found in field investigation that in some cases, people borrow money from *Mahajans* (money-lenders) on an exorbitant rate of interest and obtain VGD card in exchange of that money. After getting VGD atta, they sell some portion of it and repay the money. On the other hand, it is also gathered from some quarters of civil society members that irregularities are regular phenomena in FFW program. Following figure provides evidence to this assertion:

**Figure 5.4: Civil Society Members Opinion on Irregularities in FFW Program**

![Figure 5.4: Civil Society Members Opinion on Irregularities in FFW Program](source: Field Survey, 2008)

The above figure shows that among civil society members of four Upazilas, 43% said that irregularity persists while 29% responded that the program is now more or less fair because of Army’s surveillance. But they are in the opinion that there were massive irregularities in the earlier regimes. On the other hand, while asking about the type of irregularities they normally experience, their response seem to be interesting as illustrated in the table given below:

**Table 5.8: Civil Society Members Opinion on the Types of FFW Irregularities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of irregularities</th>
<th>Percentages of respondent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No scope of monitoring</td>
<td>25.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using as Vote Bank</td>
<td>25.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgery in Signature</td>
<td>2.66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2008
The above table shows in most of the cases, UP Chairmen and Members try to manipulate the program with a view to using the beneficiaries as their vote bank.

While analyzing the responses of feasibility study, 21% respondent among civil society members says that there is no feasibility study before the finalization of any project which indicates a deplorable lack of transparency in the program. However, another figure that indicates lack of accountability is that 16% respondent opined that already finished work is taken as a new project under FFW program though 51% of them have opposed it. This kind of dilemma can be evidenced from the following figure:

![Figure 5.5: Civil Society Members Opinion on Repeating Previous Projects](image)

It is also found that the program of SSN is also not widely demonstrated. Many people, especially those belong to unprivileged class; remain in darkness about the program. Those who are rather well-to-do and often keep in touch with UP members and obtain information whether card of any SSN program are available and needless to say by using their access and connection they grab the situation.

### 28. Overburdened Responsibility with No Reward or Recognition

As stated earlier, different professional and technical officials at Upazila level are usually tagged with different Unions to monitor the progress of implementation of various programs and projects. These “tag’ officers often remain reluctant to discharge their
duties as they are not entitled to receive any allowance to inspect the project sites in their respective unions. They even don’t feel any importance to their assigned responsibilities because of the unparallel importance and dominant roles played by their counterpart officials like the PIO. More or less, the same situation prevails in case of elected representatives. At present, the Chairmen and members of UP are getting a negligible amount of honoraria. This amount is so meager that they could not afford to inspect project sites quite frequently.

5.2.4 Poor Communication facilities in Different Unions

As elsewhere, the communication facilities including roads and pathways of the sampled Upazilas’ are very bad. Projects being implemented in some of the remote unions within those Upazilas are not properly monitored as it is too troublesome and time-consuming to visit there from the UP office. Therefore, the officials often rely on the report of the concerned elected representatives on status and progress of different projects and programs. District level officials or officials of similar status like the UNO, according to some of the civil society members never ever inspect the project sites. The validity of their statement is testified by the PIOs of four sampled Upazilas. Most of them in course of field investigation confirmed this allegation of civil society members and admitted that the District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer (DRRO) seldom visit the project sites of their respective Upazilas. They, however, maintained that it is quite difficult on the part of the DRRO to visit project sites frequently due to troublesome communication facilities and heavy official workloads.

5.2.5 Unholy Alliance between Officials and Elected Representatives

It is found that there is a kind of ‘give and take’ relations between PIO and UP Chairmen/ Members. Allegations are raised by UP Women Members and some members of PIC that PIOs take a fixed amount of percentage (approximately 10%) from the PIC Chairmen for assigning them project tasks under FFW program. Besides, for getting the release of sanctioned food grains/ money of FFW program prior to each installment, the PIC Chairmen have to obtain the endorsement of PIO which normally begets this unlawful transaction.

5.2.6 Ambiguity of Responsibilities in Committee
It seems that officials in the Upazila are somehow engaged in different kinds of committees. But their role and responsibilities, in most cases, as a committee member is not clearly specified for which most of them find little interest, if any, to attend and contribute to the meetings of these committees. Thus, a check and balance through the formation of different committees for the overall development activities within the Upazila is difficult to maintain. For many of these officials except the UNO or PIO, meetings of committees are nothing but to endorse the proverb like “come and take tea”. To overcome this perception with regard to committees and to obtain significant contribution from each and every official, the role and responsibilities of committee members should be clearly spelled out and necessary steps should be taken for ensuring their assigned responsibilities properly.

5.2.7 Cash Vs. Kinds?
For the implementation of different SSN programs at Upazila level, there is a debate whether to give cash money or food grains. While interviewing different stakeholders, some opined that cash money or KABITA is better than KABIKHA for its nature of easy distribution but expects detailed guidelines to be framed by the government. However, in the backdrop of field investigation, it may be suggested that government should be more cautious in this issue as cash money may give birth to the scope for graft or corruption. There may emerge inconsistency of the works to be done and actual works for lack of a measurement criterion (i.e., what amount of money should be given, which nature or what extent of job done and so and so) in KABITA program. For this reason, most of the government officials have expressed their positive view accepting KABIKHA with suggestion of increasing proper monitoring for conducting the program in a transparent way.

5.2.8 Wheat Vs. Rice?
Generally, the beneficiaries do not prefer wheat. While interviewing different beneficiaries, they clearly explained their preference for rice. Thus, in VGD program, distribution of wheat in the context of Bangladesh seems to be irrelevant as most of the people of this country are habituated to rice. Even it is found that some beneficiaries use VGD wheat (Fortified Atta) as the meal of their cattle as it is mixed with Bhushi. Sometimes even people have the tendency to sell wheat at a low price in the market.
5.2.9 Preparation of List of Beneficiaries

It is found that the list of VGF/VGD beneficiaries in most cases is prepared quite hastily. Adequate time normally is not given to identify the genuine needy or distressed people. While interviewing, one of the respondent Upazila officials at Patgram alleged that Chairmen and members of UP do not select VGD women as per prescribed guidelines of the government. He also alleged that UP Chairmen and members try to avoid or show negligence to the tag officers in VGD program. Corroborating his opinion, another respondent Upazila official clearly expressed the opinion that the list of any kind of benefits or subsidies provided by the government in an economy like Bangladesh including VGF/VGD should be selected carefully and if possible, should be cross-checked. It is also necessary, he asserted, to ensure that new beneficiaries should get priority over previous beneficiaries while preparing VGF/VGD list.

5.2.10 Distribution of Food grains

Sometimes UP Chairmen and Members feel embarrassed when all the needy people at their locality demand VGF cards because of their personal relationship with them. It also happens that sometimes relatively well-off and influential people demand VGF cards, which creates problem in selecting VGF beneficiaries. While interviewing PIC Chairmen, they opined that non-eligible people also come to take food grains at the time of distribution which, according to them, is quite embarrassing for them. During the distribution of VGD/ VGF food grains, they opined that in case of shortage of rice, PIC chairmen often have to buy rice from the local markets to pacify the masses. However, to carry out their assigned tasks under VGD, VGF and FFW program, the chairmen and members of Union Parishad do not receive any remuneration. Moreover, to meet the incidental expenses they are not entitled to get reimbursement. In such a situation, some of the PIC chairmen flatly admitted that they often compelled to adopt unlawful measures contrary to rules and regulations.

5.2.11 Adherence to and Discrepancy in Rules and Regulation

In response to the question about opening any Current Account in a bank with the approval of UNO after receiving the check of first installment of the project under FFW program, two, out of four PIO stated that they have opened the account in the respective branches of Sonali Bank. The other two respondents have said that they have not opened such account as in the cases of CFW and TR projects it is not mandatory to do so. One of
them confidently said that money of the project is generally distributed by the Army with the assistance of the Assistant Upazila Education Officer in the works under CFW projects and in that case there is little scope of corruption.

5.2.12 Travel Allowance and Transportation Cost

The Upazila officials are assigned to visit the project sites and monitor the progress of the project time to time. As different projects under FFW programs and other SSN programs like VGD and VGF are run in different Unions, it is sometimes difficult to visit long distanced places. Moreover, the officials, as mentioned earlier, are not given travel allowance to ensure that the activities of projects are regularly monitored and being executed adhering to rules and regulations. It is found in field investigation that actual transportation cost of food grains under the FFW projects is not given. The amount which is currently earmarked for transportation cost is a lump-sum amount and it is much lower than the actual cost. Consequently, the UP chairmen have to bear the extra expenses from their own pockets. Almost all PIC chairmen have expressed their resentment about transportation cost and opined that the transportation cost of food-grains from Upazila godown to the Ups should be determined on the basis of distance. To many of them, lack of travel allowance and meager transportation cost open the gateway of a systemic corruption and unfortunately that prevails at present in most of the SSN programs.

29. Timely Distribution of Food grains

One of the positive aspects of VGD and VGF program is that food grains are distributed timely to the beneficiaries. While interviewing the beneficiaries, 94% beneficiaries responded positively that they get the benefit regularly on time which is shown in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beneficiaries opinion</th>
<th>Patgram</th>
<th>Fulchhari</th>
<th>Shibchar</th>
<th>Singair</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>92.2%</td>
<td>96.6%</td>
<td>96.7%</td>
<td>91.5%</td>
<td>94.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not always</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2008

5.3. The Political Aspect
The main findings of the political aspect are described with a view to analyzing the SSN programs whether any kind of favoritism, manipulation, threat or other discriminatory activities are rooted in implementation of different projects. It also tries to explore some specific points where there is scope of non-transparent practices from the political perspective in the course of their implementation.

30. Political Favoritism

In distributing projects under FFW program, it is alleged that the Chairmen often give priority to those UP members who maintain a close alliance with them. Allegations are also there that any UP member who supports different political party is likely to be deprived in getting project tasks under FFW program. The same situation prevails in case of the distribution of cards under VGD and VGF programs. In the course of field investigation, most of the civil society members endorsed the validity of this allegation. The rationale for adopting such a tendency by the chairmen, according to them, is not only to consolidate the patron-client relation but also to increase their vote bank during election. The following figure illustrates civil society’s opinion that shows such practice is more in Patgram and relatively less in Shibchar Upazila.

![Figure 5.6: Civil Society Members Opinion on UPs Political Favoritism](image)

**Figure 5.6: Civil Society Members Opinion on UPs Political Favoritism**

Source: Field Survey, 2008

5.3.2 NGO’s Involvement and Sincerity

There is a conspicuous incongruency between the goal of SSN programs and NGO’s involvement in IG-VGD program. While the former is meant for overall improvement and welfare of impoverished people of the rural area, the latter works for maximization of its own profit. However, NGO’s performance is also not out of questions. For example, as an associate NGO – BRAC was responsible for distributing food grains in Singair
Upazila in the course of field investigation. It was seen that it sometimes failed to distribute food grains to the card holders on time. As a consequence, the sufferings of the card holders increase enormously, but no action, from any quarter, was taken against BRAC for such failure.

5.3.3 Nepotism and Manipulation of Safety Net programs

Nepotism and favoritism exist in the SSN programs. It is found in Shibchar and Fulchhari Upazilas that VGD and VGF cards are distributed to the persons who are the members of the same family though there exists clear guidance that no one from the same family is allowed to have VGD and VGF cards simultaneously. In selecting VGD beneficiaries in Shibchar Upazila, the UP male and female members generally give priority to those women who are formerly known to them or pay money to them in exchange of cards.

31. Maneuvering in Project Selection

In some cases, the projects under SSN programs are allocated by giving a short time notice (often only 3/4 days) to the chairmen to submit proposals. Capitalizing the situation, the feasibility study of such projects quite frequently cannot be properly undertaken as per rule by the relevant authority. This trend can lead the chairmen to select projects according to their own whims and caprices. In the absence of any feasibility study and close supervision, it is observed, that the chairmen themselves hurriedly prepare proposals and submit those to Upazila for necessary scrutiny and approval. Although the PIOs have admitted that they conduct feasibility study of each and every project proposal submitted by the chairmen, most of the civil society members opined that feasibility study is seldom conducted by the Upazila authority. The figure given below shows the opinion of civil society members on this aspect:

![Figure 5.7: Civil Society Members Opinion on Feasibility Study of FFW Projects](image-url)
5.3.5 Hegemony of UP Chairmen

At the Union level, UP Chairmen play key role in all kinds of development activities. The members often remain unethically obliged to the Chairmen. Though all of them are elected representatives, the spirit of democracy and the scope for debate are not put in practice that much. In Patgram Upazila, for instance, the UP members act as PIC chairmen, but in reality, the UP chairmen remain behind the scene in all kinds of activities and decisions and virtually play the role of de facto Chairmen. Sometimes the Chairmen, it is alleged, that in collaboration with the UP members select VGF/ VGD beneficiaries among their kith and kin. Such malpractice is frequently committed as no photograph of the beneficiary attached with the VGF cards. As a consequence, any person can take food grains whatever the name written in the card. This practice is in place even in the presence of Army in Shibchar. In case of road construction under FFW projects, priority is set in most cases by the UP Chairmen. However, while interviewing the concerned PIO, he expressed the opinion that the roads that connect Upazila HQ with Unions are prioritized and the concentration then goes to roads that connect Unions with the several Wards. This tradition is very much in effect, according to him, when non-political government runs the country, but under political government the scenarios are totally different due to political influence.

5.3.6 Hidden Tug of War and Sense of Fear

During field investigation, it is gathered that army’s presence and their interference in various development activities including those under SSN programs are not always appreciated by the elected representatives. The Chairmen and members sometimes face difficulties for army’s, what they termed ‘undue’ intervention in their affairs. While interviewing the UP Chairmen and Members, it is found that they are hesitant and embarrassed as they usually have to respond to army whenever they call them. Some of them have even expressed the opinion that army’s long time presence may dampen the initiative and entrepreneurship of elected representatives which in turn affects development activities at grassroots level. They also alleged that they often become the prey of misbehavior from army personnel without any plausible reason.

32. The Myth of Public Meetings in VGD Women Selection
It appears that Union Parishad plays a vital role in distributing SSN benefits to the beneficiaries. There is a provision of arranging a public meeting in front of Union Parishad office to select VGD beneficiaries. But this provision is seldom adhered to. Usually UP member becomes the *de facto* authority to select VGD women beneficiaries. While interviewing the beneficiaries, almost 45% respondents expressed their view that Chairman or Member of Union Parishad selects VGD women, sometimes on the basis of their own preferences. Figure 5.7 depicts beneficiaries’ responses about the actual procedures followed in selecting VGD women:

![Fig 5.8: Beneficiaries Opinion on the Ways of VGD Women Selection](image)

Source: Field Survey, 2008

### 33. Political Influence

While interviewing the UNOs, two out of four hold the view that as an advisor to Upazila VGF Committee, the local MP did not influence in the decisional process of VGF program. On the other hand, one UNO admitted affirmatively while the rest one was reluctant to make any comment on it. It is interesting to note that during field investigation when beneficiaries are asked the same question, most of them also replied negatively which depicts a totally different picture from the one that is demonstrated by the media and the civil society of the country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MPs influence</th>
<th>Name of Upazila</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patgram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>97.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not always</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above table shows that only 2.2% beneficiaries admit indirectly that MP’s tried to influence in the development projects. One reason behind it is the direct involvement of Army in the management of VGF program. However, the responses of civil society members in this question are a bit different. 20% of them, as it is shown in the table 5.11, opined that irregularities or malpractices are still evident in the program and the reason for such irregularities or malpractices is mostly political.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irregularity before, now fair</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2008

5.4 The Socio-Cultural Aspect

The findings that seem to affect the societal values as well as the cultural norms of the country have been categorized in the socio-cultural aspect of this study. The aspect attempts to point out some common tendencies contiguous to the programs which, if exist, impact an adverse effect in the long run for the society as a whole.

34. Lack of Awareness of Beneficiaries

The aim of the VGD program is to make the poor women self-reliant after giving them training, loan and savings facilities along with providing food grains. But most of the women are found not well aware of the objectives of the program. They are satisfied with what they get as a food aid. Food grains are distributed throughout the year but the overall socio-economic picture of the beneficiaries does not change conspicuously. In case of savings under VGD program, the women of this are found to save money to the NGOs, but they are not completely aware of keeping any document of that savings. For example, in Shibchar Upazila, it is alleged that BRAC is not paying back the savings money to the VGD women.
Moreover, most of the beneficiaries are not even well aware about the use of benefits properly. For example, after getting *Pusti* (fortified) *Atta*, in many cases, beneficiaries sell it to the local *Farias* (middlemen). Most of them think that this *Pusti Atta* is not suitable for eating as they are not habituated with it. But in reality, this *Atta* is more nutritious than the normal wheat flour and it is relatively more expensive. Because of their lack of consciousness about *Pusti* (fortified) *Atta*, they either sell it cheaply or take *Bhushi* from it so that they can use it for their cattle’s food.

5.4.2 Free Food and Laziness

Critics of SSN programs often ask a question whether there is any correlation between getting something free and thus remaining idle. While interviewing different stakeholders, many respondents, especially the members of civil society corroborated the same and stressed that the beneficiaries should be compelled to get involved in any kind of activities for getting benefits of VGD or VGF program. Instead of getting benefits free, they also observed that food grains are usually given to beneficiaries throughout the year but the overall socio-economic scenario of them remains unchanged. The beneficiaries become habituated to get free food grains and thus often become reluctant to get involved into income generating activities. This sentiment of different stakeholders should be taken into consideration by the policy makers in initiating SSN programs in future.

35. Bribe: An Open Secret phenomenon?

Almost all civil society members have opined that it is an open secret fact that UP Chairmen/members take bribe in exchange of selecting VGF or VGD beneficiaries. It is found in Fulchhari Upazila that some of the VGF cardholders also managed VGD card by giving money to the UP members which is totally contrary to the existing rules and regulations. However, the card holders in question did not admit it openly. The persons who manage cards in exchange of kickback, as stated earlier, have to borrow the money with huge interest. To repay the loan sometimes they lose what they gain. In response to a question whether such kind of malpractices exist in their locality, 62% respondents among civil society members answered affirmatively and stated that this is an open secret phenomenon that elected representatives, particularly the UP members take money in exchange of VGD card. The figure given below illustrates their opinion:

**Figure 5.9: Civil Society Members Opinion on Bribery of UP in Exchange of Cards**
36. Deprivation of Laborers

Laborers who work under FFW projects are often deprived of their due remuneration. As per rule, a laborer is supposed to receive Tk. 150 per day, but it is found in all the four sampled Upazilas that the laborers are paid Tk. 80-100 only. It may be noted that in course of field investigation, the PIC Chairmen came out with the plea that the supervisors or the Labor Sardars remain present when wages of laborers are paid. However, while interviewing, an overwhelming majority of civil society members insisted that Tk. 80 is paid for a half-day work and the rest of money is not given to laborers in cash, rather in exchange of some other way like providing lunch. The opinion of civil society members of the sampled Upazilas on depriving laborers from their dues by PIC chairmen is illustrated in the following diagram:

![Figure 5.10: Civil Society Members Opinion on UPs Grafting of FFW Money](source)

Source: Field Survey, 2008
37. Fear of Influential Elected Representatives

The beneficiaries of the SSN programs are the poorest of the poor people of the society. They always hesitate to expose the real scenario because of the fear of oppression by influential elected representatives. It is a well-known fact that favoritism in different forms prevails in the SSN programs. However, in the course of interviewing, the beneficiaries replied negatively on the question of favoritism. Even, there is a sense of fear among respondents lest they are victimized by the local influential for spilling out the beans. Though favoritism prevails in different SSN programs, most of the respondents replied negatively indicative in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Favoritism in Project</th>
<th>Name of Upazila</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patgram</td>
<td>Fulchhari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>92.2%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not always</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2008

The above table shows that despite widespread favoritism in different SSN programs only 2.6% respondents among beneficiaries admitted that favoritism prevails while 1.9% replied that it is not a regular case. On the other hand, 95.5% respondents replied that there is no favoritism practiced in the programs. On the other hand, while the same question asked to the civil society members, most of them alleged that favoritism and irregularities are endemic and the following figure provides ample evidence of such favoritism and irregularities:
A closer look at the above figure keeping the responses of occasional irregularity into calculation shows that about 43% respondents says that irregularity prevails in different projects of FFW program. It is noteworthy that 30% civil society members opined that irregularity is lesser in present regime than that of the regimes of previous political governments.

The key findings of the study are presented in the above from four distinct aspects. These are: governance, program, political and socio-cultural. The governance aspect traces the administrative and managerial shortcomings like lack of coordination in Upazila administration, lack of seriousness in project preparation, lack of monitoring in the progress of development projects, lack of awareness of officials about their duties and responsibilities in concerned committees and implications of them in the execution of development projects. The program aspect identifies operational constraints like lack of specification in policy decisions, discrepancy in rhetoric and realities, lack of transparency in delivering services along with persistence of corruption and the consequences of them in affecting the objectives and priorities of SSN programs. It also attempted to find out the lacuna that needs solution-centric treatment. Then, the findings turn to discuss political aspect of the program and it explores the means and ways of politicization that the program is replete with by elected representatives and career officials and the nexus between the two. Finally, attempts have been made to delve deep into the societal and cultural aspects of the program where a pen-picture is illustrated with regard to the perceptions of beneficiaries and different stakeholders about the SSN programs. All these findings represent the major observations that the study explored in
the course of field investigation. The perils of food insecurity that the country is suffering in general and the distressed rural women in particular can be well arrested if affirmative actions are taken with corrective intervention on the part of the policy makers.

6. Policy Recommendations

As stated in chapter three, the prevailing distribution of power between the central government and field administration/local government is overwhelmingly asymmetric in favor of the former. Even within the local government, power is skewed towards the administration rather than elected representatives. More or less the same situation prevails in case of relationship between the elected representatives of Ups and the electorates. One of the important reasons for such unequal distribution of power is that almost all developmental activities at field level – i.e., at Upazila, are dominated by the line ministries, living little room, if there is any, for the elected representatives. Although in certain areas, elected representatives are included in the committees constituted for the preparation and execution of development projects, these committees in most cases are dominated either by the chief executive of the local administration e.g., the UNO or by the official representatives of the concerned line ministries i.e., the PIO. Consequently,
transparency and accountability of officials involved in development projects are focused toward upward echelons rather than to the public for whom they are responsible for delivering services and the quality and coverage of the resulting service provisions remain generally poor as it is revealed in the study. It is against this backdrop, the following specific recommendations are made on the basis of the findings gathered in the course of field investigation.

6.1 Governance-specific Recommendations

6.1.1: As elsewhere in Bangladesh, it is found in all the sampled Upazilas that the development works are planned, designed, implemented in inordinate haste without proper feasibility and verification, thus scopes of malpractices are born by default and inefficient and often ineffective outcomes are accrued out of development programs. Thus, proper and prudent steps should be taken to design development plans with due attention and care and, of course, with scheduling of tasks and time-frame.

6.1.2: Data and information on allocation, project, and progress of different SSN programs should be kept updated to each Union within the Upazila so that the concerned persons can easily make right and quick decisions. In this respect, UP secretary should be well-trained on how to keep and manage information in different computer-based programs.

6.1.3: Strict and exemplary punishment should be adopted in case of misappropriation in any program by officials of Upazila administration as well as UP Chairmen or Members.

6.1.4: The chain of accountability and supervisory role from the top management to the bottom level should be enhanced. The District authority should supervise and monitor the activities of Upazila office, while Upazila office should also play the same role onto UP in an effective manner on a regular basis.

6.1.5: Duties and responsibilities of Upazila officials should be equitably distributed. For example, at present, PIO and UAO are overburdened with workload, but officials like Upazila Youth Development Officer, Upazila Fisheries Officer, Upazila Livestock Officer, Upazila Social Works Officer, Upazila Cooperatives Officer and Upazila Statistics Officer have relatively less work responsibilities. So, the overall official
activities should be fairly distributed to different Upazila officials according to their portfolios.

6.1.6: UNO is overburdened with workload and found acting as Chairmen of more than 40 committees. So, his tasks should be reasonably deconcentrated to other Upazila level officials. Besides, some workloads of Upazila administration should be deconcentrated from UNO and PIO to other Upazila officials.

6.1.7: As UNOs are overburdened with their assigned jobs; the chairmanship of UNOs in different capacities thus may be replaced to some other Upazila level officials. However, the number of members of different Upazila level committees may also be decreased for the sake of reaching consensus in a short notice.

6.1.8: In implementing SSN programs like FFW, VGD and VGF, UNO should play the advisory role. Apart from him/her and PIO and UWAO, other Upazila officials should be well-aware of their responsibilities and obligations in different development programs. There should also be a good communication and understanding between appointed officials and elected representatives of UP.

6.1.9: As UP Chairmen and Members are involved with important responsibilities and make decisions for the development of their Unions/Wards, their honesty and sincerity should be without any question. Thus, the conditions for the eligibility of candidature of UP Membership, especially of UP Chairmanship may be legally restricted to the educated persons. In addition, social movements should be waged so that honest persons become interested to contest in UP elections.

6.1.10: Active involvement of female UP members should be ensured in selecting VGD/VGF beneficiaries. The rule that laid down 50% VGD cards to be distributed by the UP female members should be strictly enforced.

6.1.11: The monthly salary of UP Chairman and Members should be increased. At present, a UP Chairman receives only Tk.1350 from government and Tk.1650 from UP’s own budget (if fund is available) while a UP Member gets 700 from government and Tk. 800 from UP resources. These amounts are too low to motivate them to their work. The enormous responsibilities that UP Chairmen and Members shoulder should be fairly treated like official responsibilities with of course justified salary. Though the general
notion about elected representatives like UP Chairmen and Members is that they are mostly corrupt and money grabber, this is also true that there are many honest elected representatives too. As the lowest tier of local government, there is no alternative to strengthen the Ups by providing them with a reasonable salary package along with a conducive office management environment so that they can discharge their assigned responsibilities in an efficient and effective manner.

6.2 Program-specific Recommendations

6.2.1: Field experience shows that narrow political consideration remain one of the mammoth obstacles to effective and fruitful program activities at Upazila level. Political choice and fraction ruin the overall development goals at grass-roots level. This is perhaps, the most conspicuous reason that hinders the development goals to be misdirected, and the target and downtrodden people to be deprived. Thus, steps should be taken to both legally and culturally to remain apolitical at UP level elections.

6.2.2: The Number of VGD and VGF cards should be distributed on the basis of Ward in each Union. If the cards are distributed on Ward-basis, it will be more representative to the people of the community.

6.2.3: Upazila Livestock office, Upazila Fisheries office, Upazila Cooperative office and Upazila Agriculture office can be given responsibilities to arrange income generating training to VGD women. Besides, Upazila Rural Development Office/ Palli Daridro Bimochon Foundation (PDBF) can work to provide savings and loan facilities to the impoverished women.

6.2.4: The responsibilities of distribution of atta by NGOs may be reconsidered as NGOs usually work for profit while SSN programs are purely welfare activities run by the government. So, there is a clash of philosophical interest between the two service providers. Besides, in one sampled Upazila, NGO is alleged of not repaying the savings money of VGD women.

6.2.5: Monitoring of VGD, VGF, especially of FFW program should be strengthened. For this purpose, a regular monitoring body may be composed at the Upazila level to ensure transparency and accountability of the program.
6.2.6: Efforts may be taken to establish a partnership program between local government and civil society to educate the general people and beneficiaries about the objectives and activities of different SSN program. The beneficiaries should be made well-aware of why are they getting benefits from the government. The beneficiaries should be made to have the mentality of extending the hands of cooperation so that more vulnerable people are not deprived.

6.2.7: During field investigation, it is found that in some areas like Singair Sadar, women play the role of PIC Chairmen. In such cases, it is observed that the actual tasks as PIC Chairmen are performed and supervised by the husbands of women PIC Chairmen. Needless to say, the role of women members should be ensured and if possible enhanced in different SSN programs, but their husbands’ unlawful intervention should be discouraged.

6.2.8: It is suggested by some Upazila officials that the scope and extent of FFW programs may be increased by reducing the extent of free food/money distribution programs like VGD or VGF. Some of them also opined for the discontinuation of these programs especially the VGF while there is no natural calamity or the effects of calamity get normal. The allocation for VGF program, according to them, may be effectively utilized otherwise by increasing the amount of relief or number of beneficiaries in different programs like old-aged pension, widow allowance etc.

6.2.9: The volume of development works like FFW program should be increased so that the distressed people can be given the opportunity of employment and the level of dependence on relief is reduced. The more people are employed and earn money with their labor, the more possibility for enabling them to the level of self-sufficiency.

6.2.10: There may be a provision to attach photographs of VGF beneficiaries in their respective VGF cards or using the National ID Card to minimize malpractices.

6.2.11: The presence of Army personnel/law enforcing agency and tag officers should be made obligatory at the time of distribution of food grains/money to avoid possible malpractices.
6.2.12: Wheat or Rice, whatever it may be should be distributed in a 15 Kg. sealed packet form. There is always a lower possibility of leakage, if the food grains are in that form.

6.2.13: Wages of labor working under FFW program should be reviewed on regional basis as the standard of living cost and availability of laborer are not identical throughout the country.

6.2.14: Transport cost of collecting food grains from Upazila godown to Union should be reviewed in the context of the present day situation and there should be a provision to change the amount of this cost, time to time, according to market conditions.

6.2.15: Both the elected and appointed officials responsible for different SSN programs and projects should be given some sorts of financial incentives so that they can perform their duties with motivation and do not take recourse of corruption.

6.2.16: In line with different training programs imparted to VGD women, efforts will be constructive and beneficial if Small and Medium term Enterprises (SME) like Nakshi Kantha, dairy milk, cottage industries can be established in the remote rural areas. This will help reduce excessive dependence on SSN programs and make the rural poor self-reliant. In addition, it will also reduce urban migration. However, to encourage this enterprise, government should extend credit and other facilities to the SME and local entrepreneurs.

6.2.17: IG-VGD program can be given priority by the Upazila level officials as, if properly executed; it may have a long term positive impact on national economy. Different kinds of training programs to generate income by the poor and vulnerable themselves will reduce the level of dependence on the government which will consequently pave the way of self-dependence.

6.2.18: The requirement of age in getting VGD card may be reviewed as in some cases it seemed impractical and unjustified because of huge number of old women passing unbearable life with extreme poverty.
7 Conclusion

There is no gainsaying that there is no good alternative to increasing food production to arrest this crisis. It is imperative to mend the loose ends in the present system of public food distribution to make it efficient, transparent accountable and responsive in real time.

7.1 Food security, one of the central dimensions of human security with right to food a fundamental right violation of which tantamount to violation of human dignity. Food Security is generally identified by availability of food in real time of adequate quantity with sufficient nutritional requirement and cultural acceptance for all in response to the effective demand over the supply side. Thus, food security is mediated by availability, (function of production, import, food aid receipt, domestic procurement), utilization (function of nutritional status) and accessibility (function of income). As such, food insecurity is a function of the market failure, poverty, per capita availability/ non availability and is generally measured with its below poverty line linked to a minimal calorie norm. Amrtya Sen has pointed out that democracy in South Asia responds to mass hunger. Thus food entitlement not only provides desirable linkage between demand and supply, it is also sine qua non for a sustainable democratic polity. Bangladesh, which experienced widespread food shortages at independence, food security assumes enough of importance and governmental commitment to it is enshrined in the Constitution. The public food distribution system (PFDS), despite commitment to free market economy, plays an important role, particularly for the vulnerable groups to ensure food security at national and household levels.

7.2 Unfortunately, the domestic food grain production is not only inadequate to feed the millions, the PFDS particularly at grass-roots level in programs like VGD to ameliorate the condition also lacks sufficient transparency and accountability, compounding problem of insufficient production with questionable administrative practices. There is no gainsaying that there is no good alternative to increasing food production to minimize the shortfall in national food requirement. But what the present study wants to emphasize is this: whatever staple food grains are made available through the PFDS system, that too is subjected to considerable ‘system loss’ for sheer lack of transparency and accountability on the part of those who are supposed to show modicum efficiency, transparency and accountability.
7.3 The problem of food shortage is all the more alarming in view of the continuing surge and high level of global staple food prices, caused by varied factors including diversion of grain to bio fuels, shift in diets towards meat products and the like. Given the prevailing crises in global food production, it is not surprising to see that FAO has come up with a special program on food security (SPFS) of $ 770 million for 50 countries including Bangladesh for augmenting food production in these countries. Nor it is surprising that the ADB has recently confirmed $ 170 million for developing food security system in Bangladesh, or that the recently concluded summit of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) in New Delhi (November 15, 2008), proposal was mooted by Bangladesh for establishment of an Emergency Food Reserve Stock for the member-states., much like the one envisaged for SAARC of which Bangladesh was the chief architect. (BIMSTEC is a seven-member cooperative initiative established primarily at the initiatives of India, blending ‘look east’ policy of South Asian SAARC and the ‘look west’ of the ASIAN, for the betterment of 1.3 billion representing 31% global population with a combined GDP of $ 750 billion).

It is also important that we can make the most of what we already produce through a sound management system. To cite one example, out of a total 330 cold storage in the country, 297 are presently functioning, albeit intermittently because of the chronic power disruptions and shortages, providing capacity for storage of about 1.5 million tons of potatoes. The government in the Ministry of Agriculture, has however, undertaken an ambitious plan to come up with production of 8 million tons. It is not certain whether the plan has been taken being encouraged by example of Singapore where people have been urged to switch over to potato as the staple food to counter the global price hike of rice, for, a similar campaign was also raised in the country by quarters that matters in the present government of Bangladesh, notwithstanding the fact that a significant part of the perishable food stuffs including fish, tomato, potato, etc are wasted every year just for absence of adequate preservation facilities. This mismatch between the planning and availability of complementary facilities underscores the need of sound management practice.

7.4 Management of public food distribution system, therefore, in particular assumes an important role for the developing economies like Bangladesh and specifically calls for a sound efficient management system with minimum ‘system loss’ and a maximum accountability and transparency where the activities of the government machineries are
matched by conscionable responses from responsible representatives and an alert responsive media to popularize fresh innovative ideas like the system of Dhan Bank\(^1\), to combat seasonal semi-famine condition due to inadequate employment opportunities during the lean period, commonly known as Monga in the northern regions but also not uncommon in other regions, in recognition of which a special allocation of Tk.2000 Crore has been made in the budget of the FY2008-2009.

7.5 It is indeed very crucial to ensure that the SSN programs are managed equitably and the benefits are reached to the target people least the hungry underdog turns to an angry one that not only barks but also bites. It is also better to remember this political dimension of the problem. For, food is politics, not only when there is a manifest scarcity, but also when there is enough of it.

7.6 Finally, it can be said that the possible slower growth of world economy will probably further slow down the developing economies endeavor to tide over their poverty trap. In such a circumstance, the only possible route open for a developing economy like Bangladesh is to opt for a kind of closed economy with premium on agriculture and light industry, proliferation of SME and micro-credit lending and extensive NGO operations. Such an approach can only keep the poverty at a tolerable level, but never eradicate it, promising affluence for only a very few, with flight of that capital. On the face of such reality, we are to consider the social safety net programs, their governance aspects, and possible means to improve efficacy of such selected SSN programs on the premise that transparency and accountability are the two key indicators of good governance which if can be ensured, may bring some good result to the poor and unprivileged classes of the society, marketing, improvement of rural financial services and the like (The Independent, November 15, 2008). Different findings show that poor governance is still persisting in the selected SSN programs and without a proper remedy of that through both governance and program reform, the targeted poor people will continue to be deprived. However, a considerable number of recommendations are provided on the basis of field experience that may hopefully turn the programs transparent and accountable to those for whom these are undertaken.

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\(^1\) The concept of the Dhan Bank pioneered by a group of professors of Jahangirnagar University for considering establishment of Food Banks at the Divisional level to ensure ready availability at the time of need.
References


UNDP and GoB. 2006. Role and Effectiveness of Bangladesh Civil Service in Achieving MDGs. Dhaka.


Annexure – I

Questionnaire of the Research Project

Transparency and Accountability for Ensuring Food Security in Bangladesh: A Study on Field Institutions

(The questionnaire will be used for research purpose only and your information and answer will be treated strictly confidentially.)

Questionnaire (Sample No. 1)
Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO)

General Information

Name of Upazila:
1. Name of Interviewee: 2. Age:
3. Gender: 4. Education:
5. Work experience: 6. Religion:

Food for Works (FFW) Program

1. What role do you play as the chairman of Upazila Rural Infrastructure Reconstruction and Maintenance Committee?
   Ans…………………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………………….

2. How much resources (food grain/ money) are allocated under FFW program in your Upazila in the following financial years?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Year</th>
<th>Allocated food grains</th>
<th>Actually distributed food grains</th>
<th>Allocated money</th>
<th>Actually disbursed money</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. How the food grains are allocated under FFW program in your Upazila?
   Ans…………………………………………………………………………………………

4. How the amount of money is disbursed under FFW program in your Upazila?
   Ans…………………………………………………………………………………………
5. Are the monthly meeting of *Upazila Rural Infrastructure Reconstruction and Maintenance Committee* held regularly?

- Yes ☐  ☒ No ☐  ☐ Not always ☐

6. Is the attendance of monthly meeting of *Upazila Rural Infrastructure Reconstruction and Maintenance Committee* satisfactory?

- Yes ☐  ☒ No ☐

If not, Please state the reasons.

Ans…………………………………………………………………………………………

7. Do you think that there is a bureaucratic red-tapism in implementing projects as the selected projects are to be approved by the *District Coordination Committee*?

- Yes ☐  ☒ No ☐

8. How does the *Zila Karnadhar Committee* ensure monitoring of project?

Ans…………………………………………………………………………………………

9. How does the committee ensure proper use of allocated resources for the project?

Ans…………………………………………………………………………………………

10. How does the committee ensure the disbursement of due remuneration to the labourer worked under FFW projects?

Ans…………………………………………………………………………………………

**Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) Program**

11. Does Union VGD Committee submit its monthly progress report regularly on time?

- Yes ☐  ☒ No ☐  ☐ Not always ☐

12. Is there any Upazila official responsible for distributing food grains under VGD program?

- Yes ☐  ☒ No ☐

If yes, how does he perform this duty?

Ans…………………………………………………………………………………………

13. Is the provision for including 50% women in the list of VGD program by the UP Female members properly utilized?

- Yes ☐  ☒ No ☐  ☐ Not always ☐

14. What kind of role do you play in selecting women in the VGD program?

Ans…………………………………………………………………………………………
15. As a Chairman of Upazila VGD Committee how do you evaluate the performance of NGOs involved in VGD program? Please express your observation.
Ans...........................................................................................................................................

16. Is monthly meeting of IGVGD Sub-committee and its progress report duly held and submitted on time through you to Upazila VGD committee?

Yes ☐  ☒ No ☐  ☐ Not always ☐

Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) Program

17. What specific role does Upazila VGF Committee play in VGF program?
Ans...........................................................................................................................................

18. How many times in a month the Upazila VGF Committee’s meeting held?
Ans...........................................................................................................................................

19. Please inform us about the last meeting of Upazila VGF Committee.
   Date of last meeting:
   Number of Members attended:
   Important resolutions/ decisions of the meeting:
Ans...........................................................................................................................................

20. As an advisor of Upazila VGF Committee, does the MP used to influence in the decisional procedure of VGF program anyway?

Yes ☐  ☐ No ☐  ☒ Not always ☐
If yes, how?
Ans...........................................................................................................................................

21. What are the issues does Upazila VGF Committee monitor and how?
Ans...........................................................................................................................................

22. Which criteria are followed most frequently by Upazila VGF Committee to identify its beneficiaries?
Ans...........................................................................................................................................

23. Are these criteria followed all the time?

Yes ☐  ☒ No ☐  ☐ Not always ☐
If not, on what basis VGF beneficiaries are selected?
Ans...........................................................................................................................................

24. How and where is VGF card distributed among beneficiaries?

122
25. What amount of food grain is given to each VGF card holder?
Ans………………………………………………………………………………………….

26. Please fill in the blanks below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Year</th>
<th>Number of potential VGF beneficiaries in the Upazila</th>
<th>Number of VGF Cards Issued in the Upazila</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

27. Was there any case of misappropriation of VGF program in your Upazila where DC had to take legal action against the perpetrator?

☑ Yes □ ☒ No □
If yes, please provide us a few cases.
Ans………………………………………………………………………………………….

28. Do you think that the above mentioned three programs are running in a transparent way in your Upazila?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FFW</th>
<th>VGD</th>
<th>VGF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not always</td>
<td>Not always</td>
<td>Not always</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If yes, please mention the prevailing mechanisms of how these programs are running in a transparent way?
Ans………………………………………………………………………………………….

If no, please mention the reasons.
Ans………………………………………………………………………………………….

29. Please give some suggestions to run these programs in a more transparent way.
Ans………………………………………………………………………………………….

Thank you for your kind Co-operation
Field Investigator:
Signature:
Date:
Transparency and Accountability for Ensuring Food Security in Bangladesh: A Study on Field Institutions

(The questionnaire will be used for research purpose only and your information and answer will be treated strictly confidentially.)

**Questionnaire (Sample No. 2)**

**Project Implementation Officer (PIO)**

**General Information**

Name of Upazila:

1. Name of Interviewee: 2. Age:
3. Gender: 4. Education:
5. Work experience: 6. Religion:

**Food for Works (FFW) Program**

1. What are the projects currently being operational under FFW program in this Upazila?
Ans………………………………………………………………………………………….
………………………………………………………………………………………...........

2. Please provide us the following information of FFW program for the Fiscal Year 2007-08, 2006-07 and 2005-06

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Project proposals received by Upazila Rural Infrastructure Reconstruction and Maintenance Committee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of approved projects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative/ Priority project, if any</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of projects under PMR (Post Monsoon Rehabilitation) program/ TR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget (food grain/ money)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Is the feasibility study of the project proposed by Union done and how?
Ans…………………………………………………………………………………………..
………………………………………………………………………………………...........

4. Is there any project that has been rejected after feasibility study?
Yes □  ☒ No □
If yes, please mention a few cases and the reasons thereof
Ans..........................................................................................................................................
...............................................................................................................................................

5. Is there any project being operational like:
   □ Pond/ canal digging or re-digging
   □ Road Construction/ repairing
   □ Road embankment
   □ Earth filling
   □ No such project

6. How often do you visit different project sites in a month to monitor the progress of
different projects taken under Rural Infrastructural Reform Program?
Ans……………………………………………………………………………………………………

7. Do you find any problem in discharging your assigned duties in the operation of
different projects?
Yes □  ☒ No □  ☐ Not always □

8. Please fill the following blank:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of approved projects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of projects completed before 31st May</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of projects not completed before 31st May</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total amount of food grains/ money paid back to the Upazila</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. What measures are taken regarding the projects that are not completed before 31st May?
Ans……………………………………………………………………………………………………
...............................................................................................................................................

10. Do you think that there is a trend of political gain or consideration in providing the
project resources (food grain or money) by PIC/UP to any vested-interest groups?
Yes □  ☒ No □  ☐ Not always □
If yes, how is the political consideration made?
11. What are the mechanisms followed in prioritizing the projects at the Upazila?
Ans........................................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................................................

12. Do you face any problem in selecting projects?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not always ☐
If yes, please mention.
Ans........................................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................................................

13. How does District Rural Infrastructure Reconstruction and Maintenance Coordination Committee review the progress of project implementation and recommend about its improvement?
Ans........................................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................................................

14. Is there any case that Zila Karnadhar Committee took initiatives against anyone for irregularities in the project?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐
If yes, please mention
Ans........................................................................................................................................

15. How frequently does District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer (DRRO) visit the project sites of your Upazila?
Ans........................................................................................................................................

16. Does DRRO arrange the monthly meeting of PIOs?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not always ☐

17. Does UNO arrange meeting of Upazila Rural Infrastructure Reconstruction and Maintenance Committee at least once in a month?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not always ☐

18. What suggestions will you give to improve the overall project activities worked under FFW program?
................................................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................................................

19. Please help us by providing the information relating right from the initiation of a project to its execution
20. How do you play your role in selecting VGD women in the Upazila?
Ans……………………………………………………………………………………........
................................................................................................................................................

21. As a Member Secretary of IGVGD sub-committee please appraise the activities of assigned NGO for VGF program in the Upazila. Please make a few comments in response to your appraisal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not satisfactory</th>
<th>Moderately satisfactory</th>
<th>Highly satisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22. Is the monthly meeting of Upazila IGVGD sub-committee held and submitted its reports to Upazila VGD committee regularly?

☐ Yes □ ☒ No □
If yes, would you please provide a copy of such report?
................................................................................................................................................

23. Do you face any problem(s) in discharging your duties?

☐ Yes □ ☒ No □
If yes, what are these?
Ans……………………………………………………………………………………..............................
................................................................................................................................................

24. Please give some suggestions to overcome these problems.
Ans……………………………………………………………………………………..............................
................................................................................................................................................

25. How do you reserve and register the storing of food grains and maintain other accounts as Member Secretary of Upazila VGF committee?
Ans……………………………………………………………………………………..............................

26. How do people in the Union come to know about the distribution of VGF cards?
Ans……………………………………………………………………………………..............................
27. Do all the members of *Union VGF Committee* give signature in the prepared list of identified VGF beneficiaries?

- Yes ☐  ☒ No ☐  ☐ Not always ☐

If no, what are the reasons?

................................................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................................................

28. Do you think that the above mentioned three programs are running in a transparent way in your Upazila?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FFW</th>
<th>VGD</th>
<th>VGF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes ☐ no ☐ Not always ☐</td>
<td>yes ☐ no ☐ Not always ☐</td>
<td>yes ☐ no ☐ Not always ☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If yes, please mention the prevailing mechanisms of how these programs are running in a transparent way?

Ans.........................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................................................

If no, please mention the reasons.

Ans.........................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................................................

29. Please give some suggestions to run these programs in a more transparent way.

Ans.........................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................................................

Thank you for your kind Co-operation

Field Investigator:
Signature:
Date:
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(The questionnaire will be used for research purpose only and your information and answer will be treated strictly confidentially.)

Questionnaire (Sample No. 3)
Upazila Women Affairs Officer

General Information

Name of Upazila:
1. Name of Interviewee:
2. Age:
3. Gender:
4. Education:
5. Work experience:
6. Religion:

Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) Program

1. What role do you play in selecting VGD beneficiaries?
   Ans..........................................................................................................................................
   ...............................................................................................................................................

2. What is your observation about the role of assigned NGO in VGD program as a member secretary of Upazila IGVD Sub-committee?
   Ans..........................................................................................................................................
   ...............................................................................................................................................

3. Is the monthly meeting of IGVGD Sub-committee held regularly and sent its report to the Upazila VGD committee on time?
   ☑ Yes ☐  ☒ No ☐  ☐ Not always ☐
   If not, what is the problem?
   ..........................................................................................................................................

4. Would you please give us a copy of that report?
   Interviewer’s comment..........................................................................................................

5. Is there any involvement of Upazila Women Affairs Officer in case of dispute by the NGO in paying back the savings money to VGD women?
Yes □  ☒ No □
If yes, what do you generally do?
................................................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................................................
6. Do you find any problem in discharging your duties?
Yes □  ☒ No □
If yes, please mention.
................................................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................................................
7. Please give some suggestions to overcome these problems.
................................................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................................................
8. Do you attend the meeting of Upazila VGF Committee?
Yes □  ☒ No □
9. What role do you play as a member of that committee?
Ans..........................................................................................................................................
..............................................................................................................................................
10. Do you participate in the monitoring process of taking food grains from the godown and that of distribution?
Yes □  ☒ No □
If yes, what specific role do you play there?
................................................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................................................
11. Do you think that the above mentioned two programs are running in a transparent way in your Upazila?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VGD</th>
<th>VGF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes □</td>
<td>no □</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If yes, please mention the prevailing mechanisms of how these programs are running in a transparent way?
If no, please mention the reasons.

12. Please give some suggestions to run these programs in a more transparent way.

Thank you for your kind Co-operation

Field Investigator:
Signature:
Date:
Transparency and Accountability for Ensuring Food Security in Bangladesh: A Study on Field Institutions

(The questionnaire will be used for research purpose only and your information and answer will be treated strictly confidentially.)

**Questionnaire (Sample 4)**

Upazila Agriculture Officer (UAO)/Upazila Agriculture Extension Officer (UAEO)/ Upazila Food Controller (UFC)/ Upazila Social Works Officer (USWO)/ Upazila Rural Development Officer (URDO)/ Upazila Cooperatives Officer (UCO)/ Upazila Education Officer (UEO)/ Upazila Livestock Resource Officer (ULRO)/ Upazila Fisheries Officer (UFO)

**General Information**

Name of Upazila:

1. Name of Interviewee: 2. Age:
3. Gender: 4. Education:
5. Work experience: 6. Religion:
7. Profession:

**Food for Works (FFW) Program**

1. What role do you play as a member of Upazila Rural Reconstruction and Maintenance Committee (URR&MC)? (UAEO, UFC, USWO, URDO)

Ans......................................................................................................................................................

........................................................................................................................................................

2. Do you face any problems in discharging your duties as a member of URR&MC Committee?

Ans......................................................................................................................................................

........................................................................................................................................................

3. Please give some suggestions for overcoming those problems.

Ans......................................................................................................................................................

........................................................................................................................................................
Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) Program

4. What role do you play as a member of Upazila VGD Committee? (UAEO, UFC, USWO, UCO, URDO)
Ans..........................................................................................................................................
...............................................................................................................................................

5. Do you have any specific role in selecting VGD women and distributing food grains to each union?
Yes ☐ No ☐
If yes, what are those roles?
................................................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................................................

6. Do you face any problem(s) in discharging your duties as a member of VGD Committee?
Ans..........................................................................................................................................
...............................................................................................................................................

7. Please give some suggestions for overcoming those problems.
Ans..........................................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................................................

Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) Program

8. What role do you play as a member of Upazila VGF Committee? (UAO, USWO, UCO)
Ans..........................................................................................................................................
...............................................................................................................................................

9. Do you have any specific role in taking food grains from godown and distributing it properly?
Yes ☐ No ☐
If yes, what are those roles?
................................................................................................................................................

10. Do you face any problems in discharging your duties as a member of VGF Committee?
11. Please give some suggestions for efficient implementation of VGF program.
Ans..........................................................................................................................................
...............................................................................................................................................

12. Do you think that the above mentioned three programs are running in a transparent way in your Upazila?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FFW</th>
<th>VGD</th>
<th>VGF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Not always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Not always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Not always</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If yes, please mention the prevailing mechanisms of how these programs are running in a transparent way?
Ans..........................................................................................................................................
...............................................................................................................................................  

If no, please mention the reasons.
Ans..........................................................................................................................................
...............................................................................................................................................  

13. Please give some suggestions to run these programs in a more transparent way.
Ans..........................................................................................................................................
...............................................................................................................................................  

Thank you for your kind Co-operation

Field Investigator:
Signature:
Date:
(The questionnaire will be used for research purpose only and your information and answer will be treated strictly confidentially.)

Questionnaire (Sample No. 5)

Union Parishad Chairman

General Information

Name of Upazila: ___________________________  Name of the Union: ___________________________
1. Name of Interviewee: ___________________________  2. Age: ___________________________
3. Gender: ___________________________  4. Education: ___________________________

Food For Works (FFW) Program

1. What role do you play in PIC?
Ans: ..........................................................................................................................................
.............................................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................................................

2. Do you arrange regular monthly meeting as a chairman of PIC?
☑ Yes □  ✗ No □  ☐ Not always □
If no, what is the reason?
................................................................................................................................................

3. Are the proceedings of the PIC meeting maintained regularly?
☑ Yes □  ✗ No □  ☐ Not always □
If no, what is the reason?
................................................................................................................................................

Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) Program

4. What role do you play as-
   a) A member of Upazila VGD Committee
b) A chairman of Union VGD Committee

5. How do you ensure the distribution of food grains among VGD card holders?

6. How do you ensure the safe storing of food grains?

7. Which mechanisms do you follow in ensuring the savings of VGD women?

---

**Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) Program**

8. Do you regularly attend the meeting of Upazila VGF Committee?
   - [x] Yes □
   - [ ] No □
   - [ ] Not always □

If not, please mention the reason.

9. What role do you play as a member of this committee?

10. Which criterion do you follow in selecting VGF beneficiaries?

11. How do you preserve the register, master roll and other documents in keeping accounts of VGF program for auditing purposes?

12. Do you think that the above mentioned three programs are running in a transparent way in your Upazila?
If yes, please mention the prevailing mechanisms of how these programs are running in a transparent way?
Ans..........................................................................................................................................
.............................................................................................................................................

If no, please mention the reasons.
Ans..........................................................................................................................................
.............................................................................................................................................

13. Please give some suggestions to run these programs in a more transparent way.
Ans..........................................................................................................................................
.............................................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................................................

Thank you for your kind Co-operation

Field Investigator:
Signature:
Date:
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(The questionnaire will be used for research purpose only and your information and answer will be treated strictly confidentially.)

Questionnaire (Sample No. 6)
Concerned NGO Official

General Information

Name of Upazila: Name of the NGO:
1. Name of Interviewee: 2. Age:
3. Gender: 4. Education:
5. Work experience: 6. Religion:
7. Profession:

Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) Program

1. What are the training programs that are being imparted to the VGD Women members by your NGO?
Ans........................................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................................

2. How many trainees are there under each training program?
Ans........................................................................................................................................................

3. How many women are trained in the current financial year by your NGO?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Year</th>
<th>Name of the Training Programs</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>No. of Trainees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. What is the present status of the women who received training from your NGO? If possible, please provide us some of their success stories.
Ans........................................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................................

5. Please comment about the status of savings of VGD women.
Ans.................................................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................................................
6. How do you repay the amount of savings to respective VGD women?
Ans.................................................................................................................................................................

7. What percentage of VGD women is covered under micro credit program by the NGO?
Ans.................................................................................................................................................................

8. Is there any security money taken by NGO against the loan to VGD women?

☐ Yes □  ☒ No □

9. What purposes do the VGD women frequently spend the loan for?
Ans.................................................................................................................................................................

10. How do you monitor the amount of loan spent by VGD women?
Ans.................................................................................................................................................................

..............................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................

**Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) Program**

11. What specific role do the representatives of NGOs play in District VGF Committee?
Ans.................................................................................................................................................................

12. Do you regularly attend the meeting of Upazila VGF Committee?

☐ Yes □  ☒ No □  ☐ Not always □

13. Do you participate in the monitoring process of taking food grains from the godown as well as their distribution?

☐ Yes □  ☒ No □

If yes, what specific role do you play their?
Ans.................................................................................................................................................................

If no, what is the reason?
Ans.................................................................................................................................................................

..............................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................

14. Do you think that the above mentioned three programs are running in a transparent way in this Upazila?
If yes, please mention the prevailing mechanisms of how these programs are running in a transparent way?
Ans.........................................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................................................
If no, please mention the reasons.
Ans.........................................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................................................

15. Please give some suggestions to run these programs in a more transparent way.
Ans.........................................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................................................
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Thank you for your kind Co-operation
Field Investigator:
Signature:
Date:
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(The questionnaire will be used for research purpose only and your information and answer will be treated strictly confidentially.)

**Questionnaire (Sample No. 7)**

**Teacher/Imam/Local Businessman**

**General Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Upazila:</th>
<th>Name of the Union:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Name of Interviewee:</td>
<td>2. Age:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Gender:</td>
<td>4. Education:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Work experience:</td>
<td>6. Religion:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Profession:</td>
<td>8. Monthly income:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Food For Works (FFW) Program**

1. Are you aware of the FFW program?
   - Yes □
   - No □

If yes, have you observed any irregularities or partiality in selecting FFW projects? Please mention.

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------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) Program**

2. Are you aware of the VGF program?
   - Yes □
   - No □

If yes, have you observed any irregularities or partiality in selecting VGF women and distributing food grains to them? Please mention.

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**Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) Program**
3. Are you aware of the VGD program?

☐ Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, have you observed any irregularities or partiality in selecting VGD beneficiaries and distributing food grains? Please mention.

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Thank you for your kind Co-operation

Field Investigator:

Signature:

Date:
Transparency and Accountability for Ensuring Food Security in Bangladesh: A Study on Field Institutions

(The questionnaire will be used for research purpose only and your information and answer will be treated strictly confidentially.)

Questionnaire (Sample No. 8)
Project Implementation Committee (PIC) Chairman

General Information

Name of Upazila: Name of the Union: Ward No.:

1. Name of Interviewee: 2. Age:
3. Gender: 4. Education:
5. Work experience: 6. Religion:
7. Profession: 8. Monthly income:

Food for Works (FFW) Program

1. What role do you play as the chairman of PIC?
Ans...........................................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................................................

2. Do you maintain master roll and other register in spending money of the project?

Yes □      No □      Not always □
If no, please mention the reason(s)
Ans...........................................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................................................

3. Is there any legal contract in the non-judicial stamp before the first installment of project?

Yes □      No □      Not always □
If no, please mention the reason(s)
Ans.
................................................................................................................................................

4. Does Supervisor or Labour Sardar remain present while wages of labourers are paid?
Yes □  ❌ No □  ❌ Not always □

If no, please mention the reason(s)
Ans…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

5. Is there any sign board of the project placed in the premises of project site?
Yes □  ❌ No □  ❌ Not always □

If no, please mention the reason(s)
Ans…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

6. Have you opened any current account in a bank with the approval of UNO after receiving the check of first installment of the project?
Yes □  ❌ No □  ❌ Not always □

If yes, which Bank?
If no, please mention the reason(s)
Ans…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

7. How do you manage the transportation cost of food grain?
Ans…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

8. Have you ever returned the unspent money allocated for the project to government treasury?
Yes □  ❌ No □

9. What amount of money or what percentage of project allocation have you spent on contingency purposes?
Ans…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

10. What problem(s) do you face in discharging your duties?
Ans…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………

11. Would you please give some suggestions for overcoming these problems?
Ans…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………
12. Would you please give some suggestions to make the implementation of the program more transparent?

Ans………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
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Thank you for your kind Co-operation

Field Investigator:
Signature:
Date:
Transparency and Accountability for Ensuring Food Security in Bangladesh: A Study on Field Institutions

(The questionnaire will be used for research purpose only and your information and answer will be treated strictly confidentially.)

Questionnaire (Sample No. 9)

Union Parishad Member
(Male/Female)

General Information

Name of Upazila: Name of Union: Ward No:
1. Name of Interviewee: 2. Age:
3. Gender: 4. Education:
5. Work experience: 6. Religion:

Food For Works (FFW) Program

1. How do you play your role in PIC?
Ans..........................................................................................................................................
.............................................................................................................................................
.............................................................................................................................................
2. Do you arrange regular monthly meeting as a chairman of PIC?
Yes □  No □  Not always □
If no, what are the reasons?
.............................................................................................................................................
.............................................................................................................................................
3. Are the proceedings of the PIC meeting maintained regularly?
Yes □  No □  Not always □
If no, what are the reasons?
.............................................................................................................................................
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Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) Program

4. What role do you play as a member of Union VGD Committee?
Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) Program

9. What role do you play as a member of Union VGF Committee?
   Ans..........................................................................................................................................
   ..............................................................................................................................................

10. What problem(s) do you face in selecting VGF beneficiaries and in the process of taking and distributing food grain from the go-down?
    Ans..........................................................................................................................................
    ..............................................................................................................................................

11. Please enlighten us with some suggestions to improve the overall system of VGF program.
    Ans..........................................................................................................................................
    ..............................................................................................................................................

12. Do you think that the above mentioned three programs are running in a transparent way in your Upazila?

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<th></th>
<th>FFW</th>
<th>VGD</th>
<th>VGF</th>
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<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Not always</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Not always</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Not always</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If yes, please mention the prevailing mechanisms of how these programs are running in a transparent way?
Ans..........................................................................................................................................
.............................................................................................................................................
If no, please mention the reasons.
Ans..........................................................................................................................................
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13. Please give some suggestions to run these programs in a more transparent way.
Ans..........................................................................................................................................
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Thank you for your kind Co-operation

Field Investigator:
Signature:
Date:
Transparency and Accountability for Ensuring Food Security in Bangladesh: A Study on Field Institutions

(The questionnaire will be used for research purpose only and your information and answer will be treated strictly confidentially.)

Questionnaire (Sample No. 10)
Perception Survey

General Information

Name of Upazila: 
Name of Union: Ward No: 
Name of Interviewee: Age: 
Gender: Education: 
Religion: Profession: 
Monthly income: Family Member: 
Land ownership: Earning member(s): 

Food for Works (FFW) Program

1. Are you aware of the FFW program?
   Yes □   ☒ No □

2. Have you received any benefit from this program?
   Yes □   ☒ No □
   If yes, when and how?

3. Is there any favoritism in selecting projects proposed by Union Parishad?
   Yes □   ☒ No □   ☒ Not always □
   If yes, what kind of favoritismyou have seen in this respect?

4. Do you think that there exists a patron-client relationship in selecting FFW projects?
   Yes □   ☒ No □   ☒ Not always □

5. Do you think the MPs used to try to influence in the selection of projects?
   Yes □   ☒ No □   ☒ Not always □
6. Do you think that there are events of misappropriation of FFW projects?

Yes □  ☒ No □  ☐ Not always □

If so, what actions are taken against such misappropriation?

7. Is there any project taken that caused water-logging?

Yes □  ☒ No □  ☐ Not always □

8. Is there any injustice or malpractices you have witnessed in paying remuneration to the labourer worked under FFW projects?

Yes □  ☒ No □  ☐ Not always □

If yes, what kind of malpractices are those?


Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) Program

9. Are you aware of the VGD program?

Yes □  ☒ No □

10. Have you received any benefit from this program?

Yes □  ☒ No □

If yes, when and how?

11. Do you get any other resources (food grain or money) apart from VGD program?

Yes □  ☒ No □  ☐ Not always □

12. Do you think you get lesser amount of food grain or money than what you should get under VGD program?

Yes □  ☒ No □

13. Have you ever lodged any complaint in case of lesser amount of food grain or money?

Yes □  ☒ No □

14. Have you been a VGD card holder between the years 2004 to 2007?

Yes □  ☒ No □

If yes, when and for how many months/years?
15. Is there any other member of VGD card holder from among your family?

☐ Yes ☒ No

16. How are women beneficiaries of VGD program selected?

☐ By the government officials;
☐ By the Chairman of Member of Union Parishad;
☐ By NGO officials;
☐ By selection in the public meetings;
☐ Other

17. Do you think that there are irregularities in carrying out the VGD program?

☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ Not always

If yes, what are those?

.......................................................... ..........................................................

18. What would you suggest to improve the overall activities of VGD program?

.......................................................... ..........................................................

.......................................................... ..........................................................

Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) Program

19. Are you aware of the VGF program?

☐ Yes ☒ No

20. Have you received any benefit from this program?

☐ Yes ☒ No

If yes, when and how?

.......................................................... ..........................................................

21. Which criteria are followed to choose you as VGF beneficiary from the following?

☐ Day labourer ☐ No source of income ☐ Landless
☐ Less than 0.15 acre of land-owner ☐ Affected by river erosion/ flood/ natural calamity. ☐ Other

22. Do you think that the other VGF beneficiaries are selected fairly?

☐ Yes ☒ No

23. Do you find any malpractices in the identification of VGF beneficiaries and distribution of VGF cards?
Yes □    Yes, in some cases □    ✗ Not at all □    ☉ I don’t know □
If yes, what kind of malpractices you found?

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

24. How many members of your family have received VGF card?
□ One    □ Other  ......................... □ Nobody

25. Is there any politicization or favoritism practiced in preparing the list of VGF beneficiaries?
Yes □    ✗ No □    ☉ Not always □
If yes, what kind of favoritism you have seen?

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

26. How do you come to know about the distribution of VGF cards?

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

27. Did you see the list of VGF beneficiaries in the notice board of Union Parishad?
Yes □    ✗ No □    ☉ Not always □

28. Is the amount of food grain you receive as VGF card holder sufficient for you and your family?
Yes □    ✗ No □    ☉ Moderately sufficient □    ☉ I don’t no □

29. If not sufficient, what else you do and how else you manage your food demand?

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

30. Is food grain for VGF card holder given in each month?
Yes □    ✗ No □    ☉ Not regularly □

31. Is food grain given in due time?
Yes □    ✗ No □    ☉ Not always □

32. What would you suggest to improve the overall activities of VGF program?

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Thank you for your kind Co-operation
Field Investigator:
Signature:
Date:
Transparency and Accountability for Ensuring Food Security in Bangladesh: A Study on Field Institutions

(The questionnaire will be used for research purpose only and your information and answer will be treated strictly confidentially.)

Questionnaire (Sample No. 11)
Perception Survey (Non-beneficiaries)

General Information

Name of Upazila:
Name of Union: Ward No:
Name of Interviewee: Age:
Gender: Education:
Religion: Profession:
Monthly income: Family Member:
Land ownership: Earning member(s):

Food for Works (FFW) Program

1. Are you aware of the FFW program?
   ☑ Yes ☐ No

2. Have you received any benefit from this program?
   ☑ Yes ☐ No
   If no, what is the reason?

3. Is there any favoritism in selecting projects proposed by Union Parishad?
   ☑ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not always
   If yes, what kind of favoritism have you seen in this respect?

4. Do you think that there exists a patron-client relationship in selecting FFW projects?
   ☑ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not always

5. Do you think the MPs used to try to influence in the selection of projects?
   ☑ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not always
6. Do you think that there are events of misappropriation of FFW projects?

☐ Yes □ ☒ No □ ☒ Not always □

If so, what actions are taken against such misappropriation?

........................................................................................................................................................................

7. Is there any project taken that caused water-logging?

☐ Yes □ ☒ No □ ☒ Not always □

8. Are you aware of the VGD program?

☐ Yes □ ☒ No □

9. Have you received any benefit from this program?

☐ Yes □ ☒ No □

If no, what is the reason?

........................................................................................................................................................................

10. Do you get any other resources (food grain or money) apart from VGD program?

☐ Yes □ ☒ No □ ☒ Not always □

11. Have you been a VGD card holder between the years 2004 to 2007?

☐ Yes □ ☒ No □

If yes, when and for how many months/years?

........................................................................................................................................................................

12. Is there any other member of VGD card holder from among your family?

☐ Yes □ ☒ No □

13. How are women beneficiaries of VGD program selected?

☐ By the government officials ☐ By the Chairman of Member of Union Parishad;
☐ By NGO officials ☐ By selection in the public meetings ☐ Other

14. Do you think that there are irregularities in carrying out the VGD program?

☐ Yes □ ☒ No □ ☒ Not always □

If yes, what are those?

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........................................................................................................................................................................
15. What would you suggest to improve the overall activities of VGD program?

16. Are you aware of the VGF program?
☐ Yes ☒ No

17. Have you received any benefit from this program?
☐ Yes ☒ No
If no, what is the reason?

18. Which criteria have been expressed to prevent you from being VGF beneficiary from the following?
☐ Not a day labourer ☐ having source of income ☐ Landowner
☐ More than 0.15 acre of land-owner ☐ Non-affected by river erosion/
  flood/ natural calamity. ☐ Other

19. Do you find any malpractices in the identification of VGF beneficiaries and distribution of VGF cards?
☐ Yes ☐ Yes, in some cases ☒ Not at all ☐ I don’t know
If yes, what kind of malpractices you found?

20. How many members of your family have received VGF card?
☐ One ☐ Other ……………………. ☐ Nobody

21. Is there any politicization or favoritism practiced in preparing the list of VGF beneficiaries?
☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ Not always
If yes, what kind of favoritism you have seen?

22. Did you see the list of VGF beneficiaries in the notice board of Union Parishad?
☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ Not always

155
23. What would you suggest to improve the overall activities of VGF program?

............................................................................................................................................
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Thank you for your kind Co-operation
Field Investigator:
Signature:
Date:
Transparency and Accountability for Ensuring Food Security in Bangladesh: A Study on Field Institutions

(The questionnaire will be used for research purpose only and your information and answer will be treated strictly confidentially.)

Checklist for Upazila Statistics Officer

General Information

1. Name of Interviewee: 2. Age:
3. Gender: 4. Education:
5. Work experience: 6. Religion:

Name of Upazila

1. Area of Upazila:
2. Demographic Profile of Upazila:

Number of Total Population:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Female:</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Children:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muslim:</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minorities:</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Landless (Male):</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Landless (Female):</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disabled:</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Widow:</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
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</table>

3. Major professions in the Upazila:
4. Name and number of industries, if any:
5. Number and percentage of farmers:
6. Occurrence of natural calamities:
7. Size of cultivable land in the Upazila:
8. Size of uncultivable land in the Upazila:
9. Size of unused cultivable land in the Upazila:
10. Agricultural production:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.</th>
<th>Name of product</th>
<th>Production in the Upazila</th>
<th>Total production in the country</th>
<th>Production demand in the Upazila</th>
<th>Production Unavailability/ Surplus in the Upazila</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>Aush</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Amon</td>
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<td>Boro</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Wheat</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Bhutta</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Potato</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Pulse</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Other</td>
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11. Union Profile:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.</th>
<th>Name of Union</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Number of VGF card holder</th>
<th>Number of VGD card holder</th>
<th>Number of beneficiaries in FFW program</th>
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<td>1</td>
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12. Are there any mechanisms/ tools adopted to assess the demand of food grains in the Upazila?

☐ Yes □ ☒ No □
13. How is food demand assessed in the Upazila?

………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………

Thank you for your kind Co-operation

Field Investigator:

Signature:

Date:
Annexure II: Distribution of Wheat/Rice for VGD Program

Ministry of Women and Children Affairs

Government Order

Department of Women Affairs Allocation Order (AO) 21 Upazilas

Department of Relief and Rehabilitation Allocation Order (AO) 357 Upazilas

Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) DO (Requesting Paper)

Circulation of DO by Upazila Food Controller (Distribution Paper)

Chairman (UPVGD Committee)
Food Taking
Food Distribution

Annexure III: Distribution of Pusti Atta for VGD Program

Ministry of Women and Children Affairs

Government Order

Department of Women Affairs Allocation Order (AO) 21 Upazilas

Department of Relief and Rehabilitation Allocation Order (AO) 357 Upazilas

Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) DO (Requesting Paper)

Circulation of DO by Upazila Food Controller (Distribution Paper)

Chairman (UPVGD Committee) Food Taking Food Distribution

Annexure IV: Composition of District VGD Committee

1. Deputy Commissioner Chairman
2. Deputy Director, Agriculture Extension Member
3. Upazila Nirbahi Officer (All) Member
4. District Food Controller Member
5. District Livestock Resources Officer Member
6. District Fisheries Officer Member
7. District Primary Education Officer Member
8. District Women Affairs Officer Member
9. District Cooperatives Officer Member
10. Deputy Director, BRDB Member
11. District Ansar and Village Defence Officer (VDP) Member
12. Representative of each associate NGO Member
13. District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer Member- Secretary
Annexure V: Composition of Upazila VGD Committee

1. Upazila Nirbahi Officer Chairman
2. Upazila Agriculture Extension Officer Member
3. Upazila Food Controller Member
4. Upazila Livestock Resources Officer Member
5. Upazila Fisheries Officer Member
6. Upazila Education Officer Member
7. Upazila Cooperatives Officer Member
8. Upazila Social Service Officer Member
9. Upazila Rural Development Officer Member
10. Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer Member
11. Upazila Youth Development Officer Member
12. Upazila Women Affairs Officer/ Upazila Project Officer Member
13. Chairmen of all Union Parishads Member
14. Representative of each associate NGO Member
15. Community Nutrition Organizer (where applicable) Member
16. Upazila Project Implementation Officer Member Secretary

Source: Department of Women Affairs, 2007-2008:16-17)
Annexure VI: Upazila IGVGD Sub-Committee

1. Upazila Livestock Resources Officer Chairman
2. Upazila Family Planning Officer Member
3. Upazila Social Service Officer Member
4. Upazila Project Implementation Officer Member
5. Upazila Youth Development Officer Member
6. Upazila Non-formal Education Project Officer Member
7. Upazila Nutrition Coordinator (If any) Member
8. Assistant Agriculture Extension Officer Member
9. Upazila Head of Associate NGO Member
10. Upazila Women Affairs Officer/ Upazila Project Implementation Officer Member –Secretary

If Women Affairs Officer is not available in any Upazila then Upazila Project Implementation Officer performs duties as member secretary of the committee.

Annexure VII: Union VGD Committee

1. Chairman of Union Parishad Chairman
2. All members of Union Parishad (including 3 elected female members) Member
3. Union Family Planning Assistant (Family Welfare Assistant/Inspector) Member
4. Representative of Associate NGO Member
5. One Teacher of Govt. Primary School (preferably female) Member
6. Union Block Supervisor Member
7. Union Livestock Resources Assistant Member
8. Union Health Service Assistant Member
9. Community Nutrition Organizer (where applicable) Member
10. Community Nutrition Promoter (where applicable) Member
11. 3 VGD women of ongoing VGD food cycle from 3 Wards Member
12. Secretary of Union Parishad Member Secretary

If the chairman of Union Parishad is, for any reason, sacked or s/he resigns or is unable to perform duties then Upazila Nirbahi Officer instantly selects an alternative person (male/female member of Union Parishad) to act as chairman of Union VGD Committee. The members of the Union VGD Committee have to attend the monthly meeting regularly.

Annexure VIII: Composition of District VGF Committee

1. Deputy Commissioner Chairman
2. Civil Surgeon Member
3. Deputy-Director, Agriculture Extension Member
4. District Education Officer (Higher Secondary) Member
5. District Cooperatives Officer Member
6. District Livestock Resources Officer Member
7. District Fisheries Officer Member
8. Deputy-Director, Social Service Department Member
9. Project Director/Deputy Director, BRDB Member
10. District Food Controller Member
11. Upazila Nirbahi Officer (All) Member
12. Paurashava Chairman (All) Member
13. District Women Affairs Officer Member
14. Three Representatives of Voluntary Organization associated with Program (Nominated by DC) Member
15. Two Respectable Persons of District (Nominated by DC) Member
16. District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer –Secretary Member

The District VGF Committee is mainly responsible for reallocating food grains and money for transportation and incidental costs in accordance with the GO issued in favor of the district. It is also entrusted with the responsibility for ensuring proper implementation and monitoring of the progress of VGF activities within the district.
### Annexure IX: Composition of Upazila VGF Committee

1. Upazila Nirbahi Officer **Chairman**
2. Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer **Member**
3. Upazila Women Affairs Officer **Member**
4. Upazila Education Officer **Member**
5. Upazila Agriculture Officer **Member**
6. Upazila Cooperatives Officer **Member**
7. Upazila Livestock Resources Officer **Member**
8. Upazila Fisheries Officer **Member**
9. Upazila Social Service Officer **Member**
10. Upazila Ansar and VDP Officer **Member**
11. Upazila Youth Development Officer **Member**
12. UP Chairman (All) **Member**
13. Two Representatives of Voluntary Organization associated with Program (Nominated by UNO) **Member**
14. Two Respectable Persons of District (Nominated by UNO) **Member**
15. Upazila Project Implementation Officer **Member Secretary**
Annexure X: Composition Union VGF Committee

1. Chairman, Union Parishad
2. All the male/female members of UP
3. Union Agriculture Assistant (Block Supervisor)
4. Union Family Planning Assistant
5. Field Assistant of BRDB
6. Representative of Gram Sarker (who is elected as respectable person)
7. Three Respectable Persons/Social Workers within the Union
   nominated by the UNO (at least one woman)
8. Union Parishad Secretary
Annexure XI: District Rural Infrastructure Reconstruction and Maintenance

Coordination Committee

1. Deputy Commissioner Chairman
2. Superintendent of Police Member
3. Upazila Nirbahi Officer (All) Member
4. Deputy Director, Agriculture Extension Department Member
5. Chairman, Paurashava (All) Member
6. Executive Engineer, Local Government Engineering Dept. Member
7. District Food Controller Member
8. District Fisheries Officer Member
9. District Education Officer Member
10. Upazila Project Implementation Officer (All) Member
11. District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer Member- Secretary

It can be mentioned that in case of hilly districts, the chairman of local government council of concerned district is included as number one member of the committee.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Functions of the Committee</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• to review and approve all the projects of rural infrastructure reconstruction program prepared at Upazila level;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• to circulate allocation order of food grains/money against each approved project;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• to review and recommend the progress of implementation of on going rural infrastructure reconstruction programs as a whole (Ministry of Food and Disaster Management, 2007:6).</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Annexure XII: Upazila Rural Infrastructure Reconstruction and Maintenance Committee

The composition of the Upazila Rural Infrastructure Reconstruction and Maintenance Committee is as follows:

1. Upazila Nirbahi Officer Chairman
2. Upazila Engineer Member
3. Upazila Agriculture Officer Member
4. Upazila Rural Development Officer Member
5. Upazila Social Service Officer Member
6. Upazila Accounts Officer Member
7. Upazila Fisheries Officer Member
8. Upazila Food Controller Member
9. Sub-Assistant Engineer, Public Health Division Member
10. Representative of Forest Department Member
11. Union Parishad Chairman (All) Member
12. Upazila Project Implementation Officer Member Secretary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Functions of the Committee</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• It is responsible for proper utilization of resources, preparation of all the reports and keeping records of received resources. The committee also plays its role in preparing, studying technical feasibility and reviewing technical aspects of the projects during implementation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The committee is responsible for monitoring the implementation of all the projects within the Upazila.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The Committee must include concerned UPs while discharging its responsibilities on reviewing and monitoring the implementation of projects.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The committee prepares monthly progress report of the projects within its jurisdiction and sends it to the Deputy Commissioner and Department of Relief and Rehabilitation. (Ministry of Food and Disaster Management, 2007:7-8).</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Annexure XIII: District Karnadhar Committee

The composition of the District Karnadhar Committee is as follows:

1. Deputy Commissioner Chairman
2. Superintendent of Police Member
3. Upazila Nirbahi Officer Member
4. Chairman, Paurashava (All) Member
5. Deputy-Director, Agriculture Extension Member
6. Executive Engineer, Water Development Board Member
7. Executive Engineer, Local Government Engineering Dept. Member
8. District Anti Corruption Officer Member
9. District Food Controller Member
10. District Fisheries Officer Member
11. District Education Officer Member
12. Divisional Forestry Officer Member
13. Deputy-Director, Social Service Department Member
14. District Accounts Officer Member
15. Upazila Project Implementation Officer (All) Member
16. District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer Member -Secretary

Core Functions of the Committee

- It reviews progress of the project of rural infrastructure reconstruction programs within the district and ensures their timely implementation.

- It constantly monitors whether laborers are given wages which they are entitled as well as whether resources allocated against the projects are adequate utilized.

- In addition, the committee is responsible for taking necessary action if any, on hindrances or obstacles emerging in the course of implementation of the projects. It also provides recommendation to the Department of Relief and Rehabilitation for taking necessary measures as and when required. The committee is supposed to remain vigilant bout any embezzlement/misuse of resources and is authorized to take proper action against any such incidence, if there is any.