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A Summary

# Bangladesh Reality Check Annual Report 2007



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## **Introduction**

The Reality Check initiative was started by Sida in 2007 with the overall goal to listen to and try to understand the perspectives of people living in poverty.

In Bangladesh its focus lies on the national health and primary education sector programmes. The approach and methodology used in this study evolved from the efforts of finding methods to operationalise the two perspectives of the Policy for Global Development (poor people's perspective on development and the rights perspectives).

The country strategy for Sweden's cooperation with Bangladesh tries to apply the two perspectives and has elaborated this effort further under what is known as Bangla-APPA (Applied Perspectives and Principles in Action). The Bangla-APPA outlines an approach to ensure dialogue from above (development partners, Government of Bangladesh), from within (the sector programmes) and from below (NGOs and poor men and women). This Reality Check study in Bangladesh constitutes an important element of the 'the below' approach and applies a range of participatory methods. Sida hopes that further learning from this pilot initiative will be one outcome, but the reality check should also lead to a methodological approach that ensures that the problems, needs and interests of the poor people continuously influence the planning processes and the policy dialogues of the two sector programmes.

The Reality Check initiative is structured as a qualitative 'listening' study and runs over five years. It aims to demonstrate results for people living in poverty. It gathers experience, opinions and insights of people

living in poverty, which complement the more conventional monitoring and evaluation mechanisms within the health and primary education sector programmes.

This approach provides an opportunity to give faces and voices to the numbers, as well as some answers to ‘how’ and ‘why’ the sector programmes provide poor people with services based on their needs (or not).

It deliberately explores the range of experiences of poor people and consciously embraces context specific differences. The study focuses on households and their neighbours rather than public fora, to include voices which are rarely heard such as those of the elderly, young, people with disabilities and minorities.

This summary gives you some snapshots of what the Reality Check Study Team observed and encountered during their stay in nine different villages. It is an attempt to compile poor people’s stories about their experiences of primary education and healthcare.

## The latrine of 150 people in an urban slum area



In the heart of a thriving city, where there are modern amenities and conspicuous wealth, is a slum. About 150 persons use this one latrine. Though it isn't really a latrine, rather it is a specific open place with one broken ring and a broken slab and a small piece of old polythene sheet to hide the user from others. Human faeces litter the back of the latrine which empties into the nearby water bodies where people cultivate fish.

*'During the rainy season the situation becomes worse as the latrine goes under water and faeces comes floating in front of our doors. The City Mayor, Ward Commissioner and all distinguished people of the city utter big words and feel proud about better sanitation facilities in the urban area. But what is the use of using hygienic latrine by the rich neighbours if we use such a dilapidated latrine which ensure regular spreading of diarrhoea in the heart of the city?'*

## The only water pipe for about 300 families in the slum



*'We used to drink river water but it is so polluted nowadays that we cannot. This is the only water pipe for the slum which has about 300 families. It was installed by the City Corporation recently. We have to pay Tk 10 per month to get the water which is pumped only two times per day; once in the early morning and in once the evening. Such is the demand for water that one person can hardly have time to collect 2 pitchers of water for the family. No concrete slab was constructed for this as it is in the middle of the road so it is always muddy and nobody takes care to keep it clean. During heavy rain, the water point is submerged and we cannot put the pitcher on the ground to collect water. Doctors always say to us that we will always get diarrhoea due to using of water from this tube well'.*

## Different conditions for children's play

Children in the slum, to the left, find little space to play and really wanted the school to have a good place to play.

Whereas those in this rural village, to the right, had plenty of room to play. (Although rural locations don't always mean lots of space.)



## Fahima, investing in her childrens education

Fahima is a mother of three. Her older two children live with her parents in a village some distance away because she cannot afford to pay for their education herself. Fahima, like so many parents we met, feel that education is very important. In fact, so important that she does not touch her savings in a crisis as they are exclusively for her children's future education. She did not even touch them when she was ill and needed the money but instead sold rice and borrowed from neighbours.





**‘There are many more people around and the environment is not so pleasant...’**

At 75, Ali is not able to farm anymore. He helps around the house, particularly as his four daughters leave early in the morning to go to work in the garment factory. He is proud of his daughters who are able to earn independently and change their lives.

He is happy about other changes that have taken place in his lifetime too; he finds it extraordinary that the same

amount of land can yield so much crops due to all the high yielding varieties; he is impressed with the services that come to them such as family planning and immunization.

*‘We never had such things, my wife and I would never have had six children if we had.’*

But he regrets the passing of ‘good manners’. He thinks the young are disrespectful.

*‘They don’t listen to advice any more. This is why life is chaotic. We never shouted back when people offered us advice. We would listen and take stock of what they were telling us.’*

He also misses the peace and quiet of the old days.

*‘There are many more people around and the environment is not so pleasant... but maybe I am just getting old and just see things differently now.’*



## **'With limited budget, classrooms are more important than toilets'**

This school accommodates 400 students. It is being extended under the Primary Education Development Programme II and there are no provisions for toilets in

the plan for the extension. Teachers are not sure why this is.

Upazila Engineers told us *'These plans come from the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, we have nothing to say about them. With limited budget, classrooms are more important than toilets.'*

In the meantime, the construction work means there is nowhere for the students to play.



## **'We use old books where all answers are written by the previous students and pages found missing'**

*'We are only five students in year 5. There were 49 of us when we started school five years ago. We used to like to come to school because we can play with the friends and mates. As we grew up we needed some materials to play with such as, Ludu, football, volleyball or cricket. But our school has no sports materials for us. We don't have any play ground. Children use crop fields as playground. Also, teachers do not tell any stories, recite poetry or show any magic in the class, so class is boring. Sometimes the teachers*

*fall asleep in the classroom.*

*We have no scope to play any game in the village as most of the time of the year the field have crops or go under water during the rainy season. Teachers cannot give us new books. We use old books where all answers are written by the previous students and pages are missing.'*





## **'Only those who can afford tutors get the homework done'**

The teacher puts the scholarship children at the front.

*'She ignores us and gives us purposely difficult homework. Only those who can afford tutors get the homework done and we always get into trouble, she never shows us our exam papers so we do not know why we have done badly. We think that we have not done so badly*

*but she wants us to have tutoring and until we do she will give us bad marks. If we fail to bring money that she demands for various things she scolds us in front of the rest of the class. It is hard for us poor at school'.*

## **'He dropped out against his parents' wishes and now pulls a rickshaw'**

Karim dropped out of school because he could never manage to do the homework. He asked his father to organize a tutor but his rickshaw-driving father could not afford this. The boy suffered daily beatings and was reprimanded in front of the others for not doing his homework. He dropped out against his parents' wishes and now pulls a rickshaw.



**'The light of the lamp is insufficient to see the writing in the books very clearly and I cannot write in my copy book properly'**

*'I am a student of year one in the government primary school. Since my early childhood I saw my older sister and brother go to school with books. They told me many stories of their school; how they enjoy the class and play during leisure period. This year I pressed my parent to admit me to the school. I got three books from the school and I have many friends now. I was very happy and enjoying the classes'.*

*'Now I am facing big problem with homework. We do not have electricity in our house. Only two kerosene lamps. One is used by my mother to prepare food in the evening and the other is used by my brother and sister for their homework.*

*Sometime I share a lamp with my brother and sister.*

*But the light of the lamp is insufficient to see the writing in the books very clearly and I cannot write in my copy book properly.*

*My father cannot buy enough fuel for the lamp. So my*

*mother does not allow using two lamps at the time to save fuel for the next day. As a result, every day the teachers scold me for not writing nicely in the copy book. I have asked my father for another lamp.*

*Perhaps he does not have enough money.'*



## **'I realized that the money charged by the staff was not any official fees for the bed'**

*About one month ago while working in a house, my husband who is a carpenter, fell down and broke his left leg. He was admitted to the surgical ward at the government hospital in the city. But after getting admitted I found that it is very difficult to get a bed in the ward and that many patients stayed on the floor. At first I asked the nurse to provide a bed to my husband. She told me to consult with another staff, who could manage the bed. Then I talked with a male staff of the hospital. He informed me that I had to pay Tk. 600 to get a bed because everybody pays for the bed. I spent the first night with my husband lying on the floor of the ward without any bed. On the second day I again requested another staff and he told me that not all beds are paid for. He could manage one bed if I could pay him Tk. 200. Fortunately on that day the doctor came to visit the ward and I told him about my sufferings. He then ordered the duty nurse to arrange the next available bed for my husband. I had to wait for three days to get a bed without any money. Then I realized that the money charged by the staff was not any official fees for the bed. Rather it was a bribe they were asking for providing the bed. I told the story to the nurse. The nurse told me to keep quiet otherwise the staff may create further problem. I realized that I would not get the bed if I did not tell it to the doctor.'*





Waiting room in a Government hospital. If one arrives in the hospital in the morning, the queues are huge and the system chaotic.



Example of the poor equipment of hospital laboratories. There is no fridge and only a hand operated centrifuge.

Typical conditions for in-patients in a hospital ward.





## **Old pharmacist who is available at all time and always tries to help**

Has had a shop in the market for more than 40 years and everybody goes to him for advice. People worry where they will go to when he passes away. He is available at all time, he knows everyone and always tries to help.

Poor people prefer the local pharmacies because *'the pharmacists know us and give us medicines on credit'*.

## **The mushrooming of pharmacies and diagnostic centres clustered around government hospitals**

A typical row of burgeoning private diagnostic centres and pharmacies, seeing business opportunities and providing 24 hour service, as the hospitals lack medicines, equipment and restrict their opening hours. The mushrooming of pharmacies and diagnostic centres clustered around government hospitals. These are clearly thriving enterprises used as much by the poor as by others.



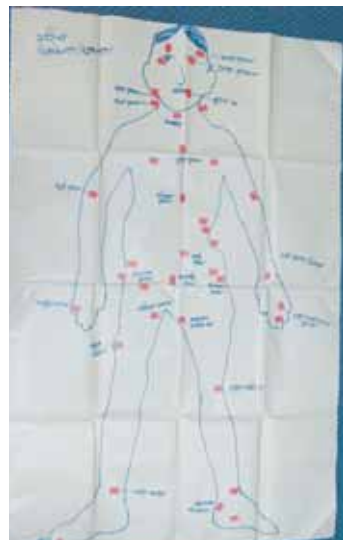


### **A respected dai with devotion to her work**

This dai (local midwife) is surrounded by some of the many children she has brought into the world. Everyone respects the dai as she is devoted to her work and comes out any time of the day or night.

### **Body map for woman's diseases**

Woman's diseases include headache, eye infection, mouth sore, pain in air, throat pain, goitres, chest pain, heart pain, menstruation irregularities, infection in urinary tract, pain in arm and fingers, sore on legs, joint and leg pains, finger disorder, hand pain and hardness.





Two brothers painted their dream school and as they explained their picture they emphasised the playground and play equipment.