



Micro-credit Initiatives for Equitable and Sustainable Development: Who Pays?

AMINUR RAHMAN*

*Department of Anthropology, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
R3T 5V5*

Summary. — There is a growing acknowledgement that micro-credit programs have potential for equitable and sustainable development. However, my anthropological research on the micro-credit program of the Grameen Bank shows that bank workers are expected to increase disbursement of loans among their members and press for high recovery rates to earn profit necessary for economic viability of the institution. To ensure timely repayment in the loan centers bank workers and borrowing peers inflict an intense pressure on women clients. In the study community many borrowers maintain their regular repayment schedules through a process of loan recycling that considerably increases the debt-liability on the individual households, increases tension and frustration among household members, produces new forms of dominance over women and increases violence in society. © 1998 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

Key words — Micro-credit, Grameen Bank, rural Bangladesh, women, violence

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of “micro-credit”—extension of small amounts of collateral-free institutional loans to jointly liable poor group members for their self-employment and income-generation—is a Grameen Bank innovation. Over the last two decades the Grameen Bank has pioneered a credit delivery system in rural Bangladesh bringing banking to poor villagers and focusing primarily on women. This Bank is now the largest micro-lending institution in Bangladesh, with 1046 rural branches covering 34913 villages, more than half of all the villages in the country. The cumulative investment of the Grameen Bank in rural Bangladesh is more than one billion US dollars disbursed among its 2.02 million members, 94% of whom are women (Grameen Bank, 1994).

In the 1980s the “programmatic success”¹ of the micro-credit scheme of Grameen Bank among poor women in rural Bangladesh became a demonstration of a successful equitable and sustainable development initiative. The programmatic success and the accreditation of this success by a large number of impact and academic studies (Chandler, 1993; Hossain, 1988; Rahman, 1986; Mizan, 1994; Shehabuddin, 1992) have contributed to spread the micro-credit concept worldwide. In recent years the Grameen Bank approach of lending to poor women has

attracted international interest and made the micro-credit approach “a new paradigm for thinking about economic development” (Morduch, 1997, p. 1). Now, there is almost a global consensus that micro-lending to the poor that is focused on the achievement of equitable (women as equal partners) and sustainable gain (in regard to livelihoods for beneficiaries and financial viability for service-providing institutions) is the key element for the 21st century’s economic and social development (MCS, 1996). Currently, most bilateral and multilateral development agencies incorporate micro-credit

*Material used in this paper was collected in 1994–95 in a rural community of Bangladesh for my doctoral dissertation and during a follow-up research in Summer 1997. The International Fellowship of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), New York, and the Young Canadian Researchers Award of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Ottawa supported these two field research. I would also like to acknowledge the fellowship of the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, New York, for completing the dissertation. My thanks are due to two anonymous referees for their thoughtful comments to the earlier version of this paper. I am grateful to my advisor, Professor Raymond Wiest, and to my colleague, Ms Deborah Woodman, for their thoughtful comments on the draft. My special thanks to Ms Gisele Morin-Labatut of IDRC, Ottawa, for providing me financial support to prepare the first draft of this paper. Final revision accepted: May 15, 1998.

into their development projects and are keen to push other multi-sectoral social development-oriented non-government organizations (NGOs) and private voluntary organizations (PVOs) into the function of credit delivery (Wood and Sharif, 1997).

2. BACKGROUND OF RESEARCH

This paper is based on my dissertation research on the Grameen Bank micro-credit program in a rural community in Bangladesh. In this paper I examine the lending structure of small loans among poor women in one study village and illustrate the implications of such lending to achieve equitable and sustainable development. Despite the success of the Grameen Bank in delivering loans to poor women and bringing socio-economic changes to many of these women's households, my findings show that there are still many borrowers who become vulnerable and trapped by the system; they are unable to succeed. At the level of grass-root credit operation, bank workers and peer group members inflict an intense pressure on borrowers for timely repayment, rather than working to raise collective responsibility and borrower empowerment as originally envisaged by the Bank (Yunus, 1997, p. 18). Many borrowers maintain their regular repayment schedules through a process of loan recycling (paying off previous loans by acquiring new ones) which considerably increases borrower debt-liability. The institutional debt-burden on individual households in turn increases anxiety and tension among household members and produces new forms of social and institutional dominance over many women clients in the program. The qualitative analysis of this paper raises questions about conventional understanding of small-scale lending by the Grameen Bank and about orthodox views of its success and empowerment of women in society (Chandler, 1993; Hashemi *et al.*, 1996; Schuler and Hashemi, 1994; Mizan, 1994; Shehabuddin, 1992).

The concepts of "public and hidden transcript" (Scott, 1990) are used to analyze the information presented in the paper. The public transcript here refers to the philosophy and objectives of the Grameen Bank and the official view of its operation. The public transcript of the Grameen Bank offers only a partial view of the process and is influenced by the desire to see success in equitable and sustainable development; hence it obscures a fuller understanding of the process. The hidden transcript is the "covert discourse" of

the informants about credit operation in the village. The hidden transcript develops "offstage" and informants often express or discuss it in a safe context, i.e., within their own group or with persons whom they trust (Scott, 1990, pp. 4–7). The public transcript of the Bank and hidden transcript of the informants together provide a more comprehensive picture of the process. The analysis of the paper also reveals that many practices of both the program members and bank workers are contrary to the public transcript (ideology) but are often rationalized by informants in the context of practical needs of the situation (Bourdieu, 1990).

3. RESEARCH SITE AND DATA COLLECTION

This study was carried out in a village in the Tangail region of Bangladesh in 1994–95 and in Summer 1997. The research site is one of the oldest program areas of the Grameen Bank. In 1980, the Grameen Bank started its operation in the study village. The duration of the program was important to examine and comprehend the long-term socio-economic and cultural implications of micro-credit for the members. The study population—295 households, 154 Grameen Bank members (120 women and 34 men) and 12 (nine male, three female) bank workers in the local branch—was manageable in terms of time and resources.

My approach to this study was based upon anthropological research techniques of participant observation, unstructured and in-depth interviews and a collection of case studies. In addition, I conducted a comprehensive household survey of my research site to provide demographic and socio-economic organizational information for the study area. Data collection was geared primarily to document the informant's experiences of their participation with the group-based lending program of the Grameen Bank. The main topics of investigation were: (i) the use of credit in the household economy; (ii) interaction between peers in the loan center and members in the household; (iii) borrowers' interaction with bank workers and with other members of the community.

Working as a male researcher on women's involvement with the Bank in a rural community was unquestionably a problematic issue. I was able to compensate the limitations of my gender on information gathering to some extent for the following reasons: I hired a full-time local female assistant for the whole period of my field work; as a Bangladesh national I was able to use the

native language and my cultural knowledge to build a rapport with informants; my previous research experiences of working with rural women in Bangladesh (Rahman, 1992) were helpful for this study.

4. TARGETING WOMEN

(a) *The public transcript*

From the beginning of its operation in Bangladesh the Grameen Bank has maintained a mandate of poverty alleviation. To alleviate rural poverty in the country the Bank has not just preferred to lend to women borrowers, but since the mid-1980s it has focused primarily on women. Bank rationale for targeting women over men in rural Bangladesh is based on the assumption of women's greater contribution to family welfare. The hypothesis is that women's priority is to invest their earnings in their children, to be followed by their spending on other household necessities. Therefore, lending to women and increasing their earnings bring more qualitative benefits to family welfare than the earnings of men. In addition, lending to women is perceived as an effective way to assist poor women in attaining their socio-economic empowerment in the larger society (Yunus, 1994). The public transcript of the Grameen Bank for targeting women in the micro-credit program is based on the following objectives: (i) to give women access to credit for increasing their earning capabilities and bringing faster improvements in the household socio-economic conditions; (ii) to organize women into groups for raising their collective consciousness, strengthening their group solidarity through weekly meetings and assisting them to attain a greater socio-economic empowerment in society.

(b) *The hidden transcript*

The hidden transcript of targeting women in the program paints a different picture than is maintained in the public transcript. In the study village, the Grameen Bank recruits only women members and excludes men from its micro-credit extension program. Informants' explanation of why the Bank excludes men in the study village is an important aspect of the hidden transcript. In the study community I found that in one male loan center for the last few years there were only four groups instead of the recommended six to eight. It is an unusual case and I probed the matter with the male bank worker (responsible

for running the loan center) to uncover the reason for not replacing or forming new groups in this loan center. The bank worker's response was:

Our superior officers have asked us not to recruit any new male members and eventually to eliminate all male groups from the loan operation. The loan center previously had six groups and thirty male members, some of whom have either left the group or have been expelled by their peers, but we have not replaced them.

The bank worker rationalized his statement in the context of "practical intelligibility" (Bourdieu, 1990) by explaining the realities of the field situation. He said:

In the field it is hard to work with male members. They do not come to meetings, they are arrogant, they argue with bank workers and sometimes they even threaten and scare the bank workers. It is good that our superior officers have decided not to recruit new male members, although we do not have any written instruction about it.²

The statement of the bank worker—a hidden transcript—implies that targeting women for the program is strategic for the Bank, i.e., accomplishment of the goal of investment and recovery of loans. Helen Todd (1997, pp. 159–160) explains that during the mid-1980s, "mainly in response to increasing repayment problems within male centers, the Grameen Bank project began a shift toward recruiting women members' instead of men.

The Bank extends loans to women, but in the study community men predominantly use these loans and supply instalments to women for their weekly payment in the loan centers. This practice goes against the public transcript of the lending institution but all actors involved with the loan operation (bank workers and borrowers) are aware of it. The borrowers and bank workers have their own views on why women are exclusively targeted for the credit extension program. In the study village both the Grameen Bank workers and borrowers acknowledge that women are accepted in the program because of their positional vulnerability. Vulnerability is understood and often explained by informants in relation to women's limited physical mobility, and to their culturally patterned behavior (shy, passive and submissive). As bank workers put it "women in the village are easily traceable. They regularly attend more group meetings than men. Women are more reliable and are more disciplined (passive/submissive) than men. Working with women is easier for us than working with men" (see Goetz and Sen Gupta, 1996).

In the rural society of Bangladesh, women are commonly identified with modesty and purity (Blanchet, 1984; Kotalova, 1993; Mandelbaum, 1988), which make women's honor (*izzat*) more vulnerable in society than that of men. One of my informants, Vanu³ explained the issue of women's *izzat* in this way:

When a woman fails to make her instalment on time, she experiences humiliation through verbal aggression from fellow members and bank workers in the loan center. Such humiliation of women in a public place gives males in the household and in the lineage a bad reputation (*dumam*). In an extreme case peers may take the defaulter to the bank office. For a man, if he is locked inside the bank building for several days it would mean almost nothing to other people in the village. But if this happens to a woman then it will bring *dumam* to her household, lineage and village. People in other villages will also gossip about it.

To make her point clear Vanu gave an example from a neighboring Grameen Bank branch where a woman failed to pay instalments for a few weeks and was brought to the bank office by her peers. The bank workers asked the woman to sit inside a room in the Bank and locked the door from outside. The woman felt so humiliated (*opomanito-hoy-se*) that she hanged herself from the roof-fan by using her own *sari* (women's clothing in rural Bangladesh).

Such examples given by informants, whether they are myth or fact, reinforce the significance of women's honor and its protection in the

village culture. Therefore, to avoid humiliation of women in the loan center or in the bank, household members try their best to arrange women's loan instalments in time. The safeguard of *izzat* (women's honor—a public transcript) by men in the society gives the lending institution an unwritten guarantee of getting back regular instalments from its women borrowers. The bank workers in the local branch are well aware of the fact that in the household it is men who use the loan and who make the instalment. Their explanation of the widespread awareness of this practice—their hidden transcript—is that the strategy of providing loans to women, instead of giving directly to men, makes the field operation and loan transactions easier for bank workers.

In response to their initial involvement with the Grameen Bank program, 108 informants out of 120 women borrowers reported that male guardians in the household either sent or influenced them to become members of the Grameen Bank loan group (see Figure 1 for details). Male guardians of eight female borrowers in this sample of 108 report that the bank workers approached them directly and persuaded them to send women to form loan groups. In exchange, the bank workers promised to provide these males in the household with loans through women's groups for their (the males) use. In the study village, there are several examples where women borrowers were not only asked or influenced by males but were forced to join in the loan group and acquire funds for male usage.

Who Asked Women Borrowers to Join?

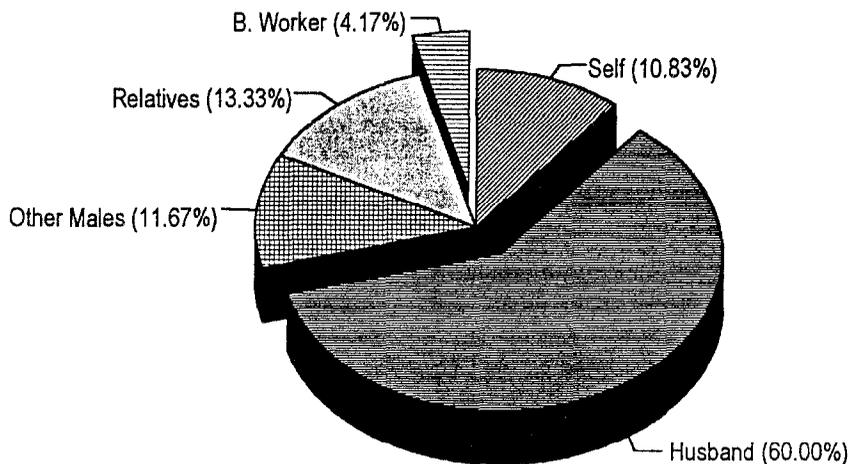


Figure 1. Who asked women to join the Grameen Bank?

The experience of Bahar (#101) is an example of this.

Bahar was brought up in a conservative family and always observed *purdah*⁴ until she joined the Grameen Bank group. The household own more than two acres of arable land and Bahar does not qualify for Grameen loans. But, within three to four years of the Bank's operation in the village, a couple of women from neighboring households owning arable land, who officially did not qualify, joined the Bank and received loans.⁵

Since then Bahar's husband insisted that she join the Bank and get money for him. Bahar resisted and refused. Then her husband exerted pressure on Bahar through his verbal aggression, e.g., quarrelling. Bahar tolerated such aggression for some time and refused to join the Bank. Finally, her husband warned her that if she did not join the Grameen group then he would send Bahar back to her natal home and he would remarry. In 1989, Bahar joined the group and received her first loan. Until 1993, when her husband migrated to Libya as a manual labourer, the husband used her loans. He instructed Bahar to continue with the Grameen Bank. Now Bahar gives her loans to her brother in a distant village who invests the money in his business and gives a share of the profit to Bahar at the end of each year. Bahar pays regular weekly instalments from her husband's remittance.

The use of customary gender relations in targeting women for micro-credit extension shows the importance of patriarchy in rural society of Bangladesh. In the study village both workers of the Bank and men in the household use patriarchal ideology—women's positional vulnerability—in their own interests. The bank workers manipulate it to recruit and extend loans, and men in the household rely on patriarchal gender relations to use women's loans and to pay their instalments. The use of women's position to attain institutional interests and interests of men reaffirms the hegemony in society (Gramsci, 1971).

5. SOCIAL COLLATERAL

(a) *Safeguard for repayment*

The Grameen Bank is the first lending institution in Bangladesh to substitute material collateral (security, e.g., pledge or guarantee) with social collateral (organized social pressure from group members) for its lending among rural poor people. The ideology of the Bank in organizing loan groups is to make each member of a group responsible to and for the collective to enhance

social solidarity. The women's loan center intends to provide women with a space to meet with each other, pay instalments, discuss various social development issues, e.g., health, education, environment and solidarity. The social development program consists of *Sixteen Decisions* and "each center tries to ensure that all its members are guided by the Sixteen Decisions in their daily lives" (Yunus, 1997, p. 19).⁶ During the early years of Bank operation in the village the workers used a good portion of their time in the center to discuss the social program with group members. However, in current practice the organized group works primarily as the safeguard for investing money and for recovering loan instalments from the borrowers (Bernasek, 1992; Chandler, 1993; Goetz and Sen Gupta, 1996).

The Grameen Bank lends to individual borrowers in the village by forming loan groups. Five members form a group which must receive a formal recognition from the Grameen Bank before their loan transaction with the Bank.⁷ Six to eight such groups—30–40 members usually from the same village—create a loan center. Women who belong to a new loan center take the responsibility of building a center-house or finding an available free space within their vicinity for the weekly meetings and loan operation. Fulfilment of these basic requirements by borrowers in a center makes them eligible for loans. The Bank grants credits to individual borrowers sequentially by establishing a unique time cycle. In the first sequence of the cycle only two members from a loan group receive loans. The bank worker observes their loan repayment behaviors for at least two months and their satisfactory completion of the loan repayments entitles the next two in the same group to receive loans. In this micro-credit program the individual is kept in line by a considerable amount of pressure from the other members of the group. The group and the loan center in this system function as institutions to ensure mutual accountability. The peer pressure, along with the institutional and moral coercion that bank workers in the village exercise on women borrowers, helped the local branch of the Bank to achieve and maintain a 98% repayment rate. But, such peer-pressure and institutional coercion on women in the study village also produce unintended consequences for the borrowers and their households.

(b) *Escalation of violence*

Women in Bangladesh encounter various forms of violence; specifically, men's violence against

women is widespread in the rural society (see Arnes and Van Beurden, 1977; White, 1992; Zaman, 1997). The patriarchal ideology, i.e., women's absolute socio-economic dependency on men, makes them vulnerable to violence in society. A study on the Grameen Bank states "credit programs may reduce domestic violence by channeling resources to families through women, and by organizing women into solidarity groups that meet regularly and make the women's lives more visible, strategies that could be used in other types of programs" (Schuler *et al.*, 1997, p. 33). Such study represents the public transcript of the program, but the information of my research shows that "social collateral"—a strategy for ensuring high repayment rates—may actually escalate violence⁸ toward women borrowers. The violence in the loan center and in the borrower's household is discussed here with the evidence of the loan operation in the study community and power hierarchy in the loan center.

In the Grameen Bank micro-credit scheme the borrowers must maintain the credibility of the loan center by ensuring regular weekly repayments to the Bank. The credibility of a center to the Bank and the potential for new loans for its borrowers is in jeopardy when even one member in the center fails to maintain her regular weekly payment of the loan instalment. The Grameen Bank has been working in the study village for the last 15 years. There are four women and two male loan centers in the village; often there are one or two members in every loan center who, because they were unable to arrange their instalments, did not come to center meetings. In such a situation, other regular members in the center are forced to sit on their bare feet on a mud floor for several hours until all instalments are collected. If the absent member is available in the village, her peers persuade her to come to the center. The appearance of the absentee in the center usually releases an outburst of anger toward her by fellow members and the bank worker. If the absent member is unavailable in the village or available but absolutely unable to make her instalment, then a number of strategies may be followed to resolve such defaulting problems in the loan center: (i) peer members in the loan group or center may pay the instalment from their own funds, depending on the amount needed and on the defaulter's own relationship with the other members; (ii) a bank worker may use other member's "Group Fund Loan" instalments (weekly payment for this loan is not obligatory) to adjust for the defaulter's weekly payment; (iii) the bank worker may lend all or

part of the instalment to the defaulting borrower in order to adjust her account or the bank worker may leave the center without collecting the default instalment (this rarely happened); (iv) in extreme situations peers in the loan center may decide to take the defaulter's saleable household items or personal assets and sell or mortgage them out to collect the instalment.⁹

One possible consequence of a defaulting member is that all the other members who paid their instalments in a timely manner must wait in the center and experience a delay before they can return to their household. In the household, the male members give instalments to women and expect them to pay the instalments to the bank worker and return home from the center promptly. Women's forced delay in the center produces disorder in household chores and may generate tension among household members. Such rising tension may turn into violence in which women are victimized. An excerpt from my field notes illustrates:

Once I missed a center meeting and in the afternoon I went to Romena's (#65) house to collect information about the meeting. As I arrived there, I found Romena sitting on her veranda (the front balcony of the house) pale and depressed. My initial inquiry about what happened went without respond for some time when Romena's husband's elder brother's wife, who lives on the same homestead, informed me that Romena had a fight with Jinat (husband). At that point Romena protested by saying that she did not fight with her husband but it was the husband who had beaten her. Romena then explained that the previous night Jinat had borrowed the instalment (*kisti*) from one of his friends in the neighboring village and promised to sell his labor to the lender. In the morning Jinat gave the *kisti* to Romena and asked her to pay it to the bank worker and return home to prepare his morning meal. Romena was delayed in the center because one member who belongs to her group comes from a distant village did not show up in the meeting. Jinat sent one of their daughters twice to the center to get Romena home. In the loan center Romena tried to explain her urgency to other members and asked permission from the bank worker to return home. The bank worker refused to accept her instalment and did not allow her to leave the loan center until the *kisti* problem was resolved. Romena, along with all other members, was forced to sit a couple of extra hours in the center before she could return home. Jinat waited at home. He was furious toward Romena and refused to accept any explanation about her delay in the center. They argued, Romena was beaten and Jinat left the house without eating his food.

As the guardian of the household Jinat asked Romena to join the Bank and borrow money for his own business. Jinat is aware that when an

instalment problem arises then other borrowers must wait in the loan center until they solve this problem. But he explains his violent behavior toward Romena as a repercussion of his frustration and anger, over which he has no control.¹⁰

Jinat used Romena's loan in his brown sugar business, but could not make enough profit from this investment to maintain regular instalments from it. Jinat used part of his capital each week to pay Romena's instalment. In this process he used-up the capital borrowed from the Bank. The household arranged instalments from other sources including borrowing for four weeks. Romena must pay instalments regularly for more six weeks to become eligible for the next loan in six weeks.

Romena is sympathetic toward Jinat's frustration. She rationalized her husband's violent behavior by explaining the societal norm, i.e., "a man in the village is not supposed to prepare his own meal." Her delay in the loan center happened because one of her peers was absent and the bank worker refused to accept her instalment. Romena stressed that such delays would make any man angry who waits for his wife to prepare his meal. However, she felt very bad, because she failed to prepare the morning meal for the husband who left home without eating any food (*khalimukhe*).

(c) *Power hierarchy in the loan center*

The power hierarchy and borrowers network within the loan center tend to understate the importance of social collateral and its implication for informants. In the Grameen Bank system when an individual group member completes payment of one of her old loans she becomes eligible for the next new loan. This new loan is usually an amount greater than the paid loan approved for the borrower within two weeks after clearing all dues on an outstanding loan. The request for a new loan must gain the consent of the group chairperson and the center chief. At the loan center problems often arise for the member in receiving the loan within the appropriate time, or in getting the expected amount (greater than the repaid loan). Such problems often occur for two reasons: (i) the loss of credibility of a particular loan center to the bank, e.g., irregularities of any members within the center; or (ii) a woman's adverse personal relations with other members or with the center chief who has authority over approvals in the center. In a situation where a woman pays off her outstanding loan but does not receive the

subsequent new loan according to established practice (which is becoming very common in the study area), she faces serious consequences of verbal aggression or physical assault from her spouse or male relatives. If the concerned member experiences a delay in receiving the new loan, or must accept an unexpectedly low amount because of another fellow member's unwillingness to consent to the loan proposal, then the problem of the loan center may broaden the dispute and lead to fights among different household or lineage members in the village. Here is an example from the study village.

Yuri (#45) got her first loan (Tk. 3000) in December 1993. At the end of fifty weeks, Yuri requested her husband (Naim) to manage funds to pay the outstanding dues (interest and emergency) on her first loan, assuring Naim that she would give him her second loan (Tk. 4000) after two weeks of the repayment. Naim borrowed the fund for Yuri from a moneylender in the village on condition that he would return the amount with interest in a couple of weeks. In early February 1994, more than five weeks after Yuri had paid all her dues on the first loan, she failed to acquire the second one. The center chief refused to consent to her new loan and the bank worker would not listen to her appeals. Naim could not keep his promise with the lender but was pressured to return the money. This situation generated tension in the household, and resulted in disputes; Yuri was victimized and physically beaten by her husband several times for her failure to acquire the new loan. Yuri and other peer members reported that Yuri could not get the second loan because of her refusal to lend "Rani" (informant #2) Tk. 1000 from the expected new loan.¹¹ Yuri's refusal to lend made Rani angry, so she asked Yuri's center chief (who is also Rani's eldest daughter), and the bank worker not to extend a second loan. Ultimately, Naim brought the issue to the center meeting where he encountered Rani and asked for an explanation of her activities against Yuri. Both Rani and Naim exchanged harsh words, the female bank worker failed to stop the argument and left the center without collecting instalments. For Lal (Rani's husband), Naim has not only humiliated his wife by using harsh words toward her before other borrowers—in a public place—but also humiliated the honor (*izzat*) of his homestead by doing it on his (Lal's) own homestead (see Aziz, 1979). Lal was angry and challenged Naim in revenge. A fight broke out the same day between Naim and Rani's husband. The fight then spread among these two lineages

in the village leading to the physical injury of several people from both sides of the dispute.

Rani, who belongs to a different loan center, rationalized her acts toward Yuri by stating that she organized and recruited all members in the center and sacrificed her own courtyard to build the center house for weekly meetings. If someone in the center fails to pay their instalment, Rani manages the amount and pays it to the bank worker. To manage such unexpected but very common crisis in the loan center, she must keep cash money at her disposal. Sometimes she arranges the cash through borrowing from other members in centers who receive new loans, but she always pays them back in time according to her promise. However, the statement of many other members and my own observations not only contradict Rani's explanation but also imply the importance of borrowers' personal networks in the loan center. Rani maintains a strong network with a few other members in two loan centers which are situated on her homestead. If Rani's household failed to arrange weekly instalments then she used her network to borrow money from other members in the center and paid her own or her daughter's instalments.

In all five loan centers in the study village, I discovered that one or two influential members had real control over the decision-making process of the center. These members are usually the organizers and the starters of the center. By starting the loan center, they gain authority to decide about the recruitment of peer members, and in the loan operation process they develop a power position and status within the center. In two loan centers such members are center chiefs and in three other centers they are not center chiefs *de jure* but they hold *de facto* power as they decide almost every issue of the center. Perpetuation of such power relations in the loan centers is contradictory to Grameen Bank ideology, because the office holders in a loan center must be elected every year and "the same person cannot be reelected twice until other members of the group have had their chance" (Yunus, 1997, p. 13). The public transcript of electing new members each year to fill the position in the center is to create poor women's leadership in rural societies in Bangladesh, and raise their self-confidence (Chandler, 1993). The bank workers in the local office are aware of the fact that a few borrowers retain power in the center; the workers use this power structure for their own benefit. The bank workers put it this way: "Influential members in the centers are helpful for smooth operations. In the loan center

they (influential members) take the responsibilities of instalment collection from other members and ease the stress and burden of bank workers."

The findings of my research suggest that the expansion of the credit program and the exercise of social collateral contribute to the escalation of violence in the study village. In addition to my own observation of several incidences of violence against women borrowers similar to Romena and Yuri, my research assistants and I kept track and followed-up other occurrences of violence in the loan center and in Grameen borrowers' households. In the last stage of my research I asked women borrowers specifically about their experience of encountering violence. In response to violence in general (verbal aggression to physical assault), interestingly all informants state that they experience violence of some kind in the household. This response is significant because it shows that violence against women is widespread in the rural society of Bangladesh. It also suggests that such actions by men are, to some extent, accepted by members of the society. This attitude of women, however, does not lend legitimacy to men's violence against women. Out of 120 women borrowers, 21 borrowers, about 18% claim a decrease, and 70% emphasize an increase in violence and aggressive behavior in the household because of their involvement with the Bank. Based on the expressions used by my informants to characterize violence and aggression, I have divided their responses into two main categories, verbal aggression and physical assault. Verbal aggression includes verbal, symbolic and psychological belligerence (Zaman, 1997, p. 1), such as rebukes, quarrels, or screaming. Physical assault includes hitting or striking and often involves beating (Figure 2).

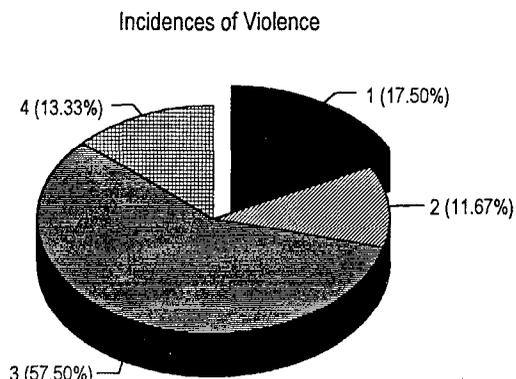


Figure 2. Incidences of verbal aggression and physical assault.

The response of 120 women borrower shows that 69 informants now encounter verbal aggression more often than they used to experience before joining the Bank. Another 16 members recall an increase in both verbal aggression and physical assault, six members in this group reported to have encountered men's violence because of women's refusal to give their loans to men or for challenging men's proposal of using women's loans. Women's control over their loans—in defiance of the patriarchal ideology—undermines men's authority in the household and may provoke violent behavior in men that victimize women (Schuler *et al.*, 1997). The informants commonly viewed men's violence against them as an expression of men's frustration that arises from the pressure to maintain timely repayment in the loan center. The examples of Romena and Yuri suggest that women become victims of violence primarily because of their powerlessness in society. In the household they are powerless in relation to their husbands and in the loan centers they are powerless before influential members and bank workers who are mostly men. However, most women who encounter violence in the household, like Romena or Yuri, often blamed either the peer group members or the bank workers instead of their own men for such behavior. Women borrowers are not only conscious of the increased violence but a few women in the study village are also gaining power by controlling their loans to resist men's violence against them.

6. LOANS IN THE HOUSEHOLD ECONOMY

(a) *Loan use pattern*

The Grameen Bank approves micro-loans to individual members of the group for investment in productive activities. Borrowers must invest their loans themselves in income-generating projects within seven days of loans acceptance and start their instalments payment on the second week by using a part of the profit earned from the loan investment. The Grameen Bank loan operation policy emphasizes a strong supervisory measure to ensure borrowers' use of their loans for income-generation and to pay instalments from their earned incomes. In this system the group chairperson and the center chiefs are obliged to supervise the loan use immediately after the loan is disbursed. Upon their satisfactory investigation they report it to the bank

worker. The bank worker then must inspect the investment and verify the report of the group with a written description of the investment to the branch manager. In addition, the investment of the borrower is further supervised by the responsible branch manager and program officer from the area office (see Chandler, 1993).

In the study community women receive loans at the Bank, but the decision of how these loans are used and by whom takes place within the household. Women borrowers bring their loans to the household economy, and household members use the loans in accordance with the priorities in the household. In addition to investing loans for income-generating projects, part of the loan may be used to meet consumption needs. In rural Bangladesh the household operates as a cooperative unit (Sen, 1990), and pouring women's loans into this unit makes it difficult to provide an exact account of the real users or beneficiaries. However, based on my field data on women's loans (1994–95),¹² I have categorized the users and presented the summary in Figure 3.

In the households of women borrowers the persons who control and use the loan and arrange instalments are considered the "users" in the study. The figure shows that men are users of more than 60% of women's loans. The study also shows that approx. 78% of total loans approved in the village are actually used for different purposes than sanctioned by the project.¹³ The practice of handing over loans and the diversion of loan amounts for other purposes is contrary to the Grameen Bank's philosophy and the commonly held view of its operation. In the study community loan use is rarely monitored, and the breakdown of the supervisory mechanism enables borrowers, in the context of individual households' economic necessity (Jansen, 1988), to transfer their loans to others or to divert loans to use for other than sanctioned purposes. The bank workers in the local branch often rationalize their practice of not supervising loan investments in terms of "practical needs of the situation" (Bourdieu, 1990). They complain about how the expansion of operations has given them an enormous work load, and how pressure is placed on them by their superior officers to collect instalments from poor members of the program. The bank workers also have their own hidden transcripts regarding loan supervision. They feel that, according to the official transcript, bank workers are obliged to supervise borrowers' loans use, but in reality the credibility of a bank worker lies mainly in his successful collection of instalments

from members. In the study branch, the institutional pressure on a bank worker to collect instalments and bank workers' own zealously in the collection of weekly instalments in the loan center hardly leave time for them to supervise the investment of loans.

A low level of loan investment supervision, scarcity of resources in the household economy, and the uncertain economic environment of the household lead members to divert loan funds and use them for purposes other than the projected investments. My study documents the use of the credit to meet immediate household needs such as payment of dowries, purchase of medicines, or meeting immediate consumption needs. In a few cases household members use women's loans to build the household resource base specifically through buying or mortgaging in land or by providing money for any of the member's travel to foreign labor markets to supply remittances.¹⁴ During my field work, eight members from the household of Grameen borrowers were living and working in foreign countries. Three out of these eight members are women and all three are Grameen borrowers

who now live in Malaysia and work in factories. In the situation where borrowers' loans are used for household resource building, then the instalments must be arranged from other sources, which may increase tension among household members. But, when return from such investment begins to pour into the household economy, it increases women's position within the household domain and helps them raise their voices in household decision making (see Todd, 1997). I present here two examples (Dilu, #84 and Rina #3) to illustrate the loan use patterns in the household and their implications for women borrowers in the village.

Dilu joined the Bank in 1980 at the beginning of its operation in the village and received her first loan of five hundred taka¹⁵ for rice husking (*a dhekki* loan). For the first few years, Dilu was considered as one of the best borrowers of the Bank in the area. In 1987, she was honored with the opportunity of becoming one of the two members who laid the foundation stone of the local Grameen Bank building. The Bank commemorated her name in the foundation stone.

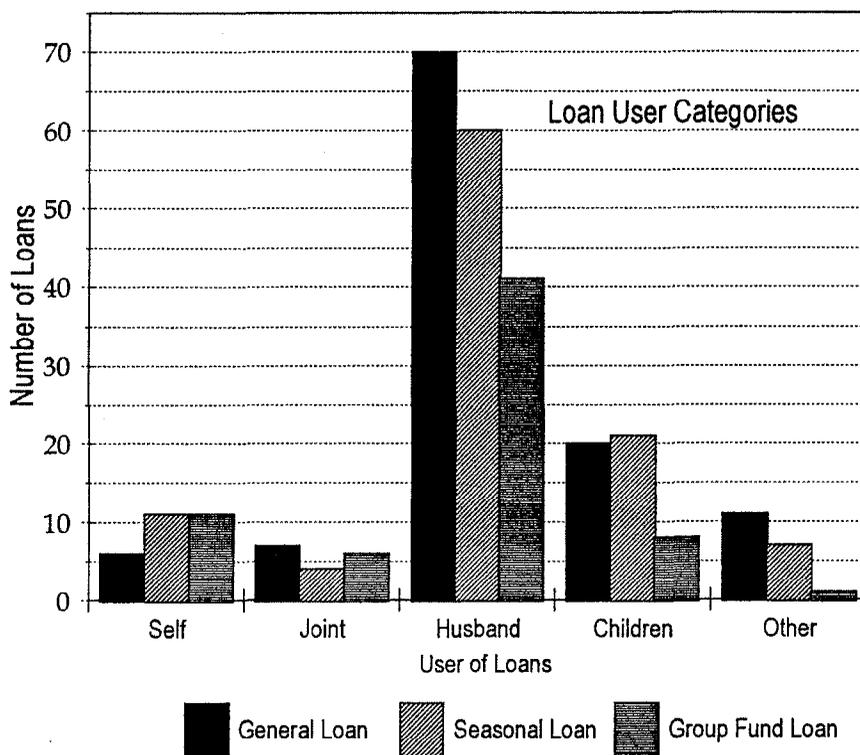


Figure 3. Women's loans users.

During 1980–1995, Dilu's General Loan had increased from 500 to 10000 taka. Over these years the household used these loans for various purposes, but all bank workers who were responsible for running her center kept her General Loan as a *dhekki* loan. For the first couple of years, Dilu used a small portion of her loan in husking rice, but she could not generate enough profit to pay instalments. So, she handed over her loans to her husband who used them in his vegetable business, making enough profit to pay regular *kisti* (instalments) and saving a little to build the household resource base. The household used the General Loans of 1985–86 to buy two calves and paid instalments from Dilu's husband's income from the vegetable business. In 1987, the household for the first time failed to generate enough income to pay the instalment. The loan amount increased during the years but the profit from the business dropped. The diminishing return from business investment encouraged the household to divert the funds and use part of three (1990, 91 and 92) General Loans to lease-in land. They arranged instalments from the business income and sometimes by borrowing money from moneylenders, and paid them after harvesting from their leased land. During these years Dilu's household became increasingly in debt and in the process Dilu lost her position within the household domain. Dilu's mother-in-law who lives in a separate household within the same homestead and has been a member of the Grameen Bank for the last 14 years. A few years ago Dilu's father-in-law became disabled because of an accident and quit his small business of timber-cutting. Since then Dilu's mother-in-law's household could not use Grameen Bank loans effectively for income-generating ventures and eventually became heavily indebted not only to the Bank but also to moneylenders in the village. Since 1994, the mother-in-law has lived in Malaysia as a foreign laborer to earn money and pay back her debts. Dilu's mother-in-law's trip has cost her 30000 taka, of which Dilu contributed 8000 from her 1993 General Loan. In 1994, Dilu paid 5000 taka as dowry to her daughter's marriage out of her General Loan of 10000 taka. Since 1993, the household paid instalments to the Bank by borrowing from moneylenders, through leasing out land and by selling household resources, e.g., cows. In 1994–95, Dilu's household also arrived in the same situation as her mother-in-law and Dilu decided to follow her mother-in-law's footsteps and travel to Malaysia for factory work. In 1995, her husband paid 20000 taka to a labor

exporting firm in Dhaka. The fund was arranged from Grameen Bank loans of 1994–95 and from her mother-in-law's remittances.

Early in 1997, after waiting almost two years, Dilu travelled to Malaysia for a factory job. When I returned to the field in Summer 1997, I found that during her three-month stay in Malaysia Dilu remitted 50000 taka to her husband. Her husband used the remittance to pay household debts and to mortgage-in land for the household. Her husband is now proud of Dilu, who has two years of contract labor with the employer in Malaysia. In this time, the household hopes to be freed from debt, to build a good house, to purchase and mortgage-in lands and bring a better future for their only son.

Another example, of Rina, gives a picture of a situation where the household members fail to arrange funds for the weekly repayment and then women arrange the instalment from their own expenditure savings or by compromising the household consumption needs, e.g., from the sale of eggs, fruits and home-grown vegetables. Rina joined the Bank in 1989 and borrowed for her husband's betel leaf business until 1993. In 1993, Rina's only son, who is in his mid-twenties, bought a used baby-taxi (a three-wheeled passenger van) with his mother's loan from the Grameen Bank and Proshika (a different NGO working in the study village). The baby-taxi was wrecked in an accident in the same year. Consequently, the household lost the capital but was left with a debt burden with both the Grameen Bank and from Proshika (the repayment schedule of Proshika is very flexible). For the last two years Rina's household undergone extreme hardship to keep up with the repayment on three Grameen Bank loans. The household pays its instalments of Tk. 260 every week from an uncertain household income of Tk. 300 to 350 (weekly). Rina's husband is a vender who sells betel leaf in the local market and the son is a day laborer. In 1994, after the accident Rina received a Group Fund Loan and Seasonal Loan from the Grameen Bank. The household used these Grameen loans, sold most of its fruit trees, and borrowed cash from all available sources to keep up the instalment payments.

In the village I witnessed several Grameen Bank members who sold pre-harvested paddy, pre-harvested fruits (jack fruit) and fruit trees and even hens with hatching eggs to collect instalments for weekly payments. The price of pulling other resources from the household and diverting funds from consumption needs to repayment of loans can cause further impover-

ishment to the members of poor households in the village (Goetz and Sen Gupta, 1996, p. 56).

(b) *Repayment schedules*

The Grameen Bank maintains its micro-credit operation within a 52-week (one year) time cycle. The first 50 weeks cover the 100% repayment of the principal amount (the borrowers pay 2% on the capital amount every week). The remaining two weeks of the year are for payment of the interest and emergency fund. In most investment loans the bank charges a rate of 20% interest and the emergency fund is 25% of the grossly calculated annual interest amount. The interest and emergency fund together is 12.5 times greater than the member's weekly instalment; these must be paid in the remaining two weeks of the year in order to become eligible for the next loan from the Grameen Bank. The following new loan is usually an amount greater than the paid loan, and is approved to the member within two weeks after clearing all dues on one of the previous outstanding loans.¹⁶

In the study village many households like (Yuri's) reported to have paid the interest and emergency fund through short-term borrowing from sources other than their own (*tan dee-yadichi*). Figure 4 details the sources of these funds. The interest and emergency funds are borrowed from other sources, either by women members or by men, with a promise to the lender that the borrower will return the amount

(usually with interest) after receiving the new loan from the Grameen Bank.

The payment of the instalment from the capital, or borrowing of funds for either instalment payments as Rina did, or the payment of the interest and emergency for new loans as Yuri did, is directly linked to the creation of debt cycles. The borrower must return the amount to the lender immediately after receiving a new loan from the Grameen Bank. The payment of this amount leads the household member to start his/her venture with a deficit on the capital. As borrowers begin a new loan with such a deficit, it continues to become a greater amount with each new loan cycle. In the long run the continuing deficit creates a spiraling debt cycle, where borrowers pay off previous loans by using the new loan.

7. MICRO-CREDIT AND FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Financial sustainability has become an important goal in the agenda of the Grameen Bank. Dr. Yunus (1995, p. 13) postulates that "a sustainable system can be built only on the basis of users' undertaking responsibility." This has led the bank to operate its micro-credit program on the basis of cost recovery and profit making. The Grameen Bank has been privileged to preferential loans at the rate of 2% annual interest from the Central Bank of Bangladesh and from other

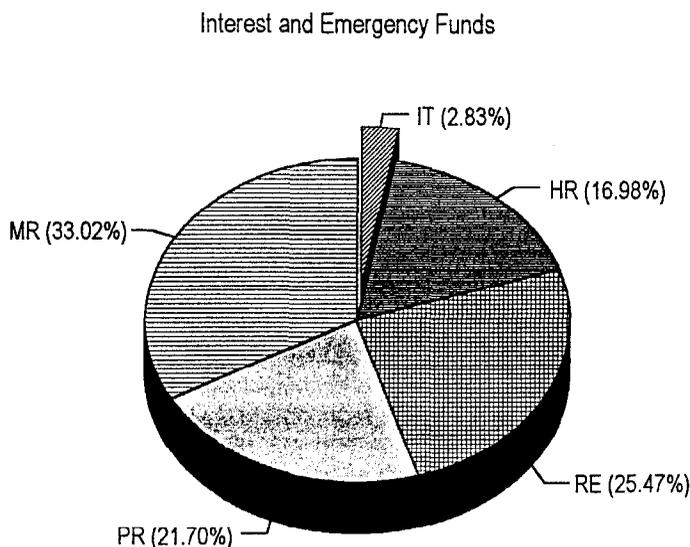


Figure 4. Sources of interest and emergency funds for women borrowers.

sympathetic banks in the West. During my period of fieldwork, the annual interest rate on most of Grameen Bank's micro-loans to the poor was 20%. It was at least 8% higher than the commercial market rate in the country.

The Grameen Bank embraces a totalizing approach of capitalism by charging interest and making a profit from its investment (Awal, 1994). Until 1991, the Grameen Bank charged 16% annual interest on its micro-loans to members. In 1991, the Grameen Bank raised salaries of its workers by around 25%, adding an additional cost to the lending program of the Bank. The increased cost became a serious hindrance to profitability and the Bank responded to the problem in terms of rules of capitalist finance (which dictate earning profit) by increasing its interest rates on investment loans from 16% to 20%. It "thereby loaded the increased cost on the borrowers" (Chandler, 1993, p. 127).

In early years of the Grameen Bank operations neither the profit-making nor the institution's financial sustainability were concerns for the Bank. Its agenda was helping the poor and the alleviation of poverty. However, since the mid-1980s, and specifically in the early 1990s, the ambition to achieve such sustainability led the Bank to increase its loan investment and recovery rate of loans in order to earn a profit. It also has been transferring loan transaction costs to borrowers. In the 1990s, the pressure on bank workers to increase investment in the local bank branches was so high that it became a matter of concern for the few managers working in the field. I present here an excerpt from one such field manager's monthly descriptive report to the Managing Director (Dr. Yunus).¹⁷ The manager wrote:

Recently, there is an intense competition among different managers to increase their loan "outstanding" (investment). Whenever we meet our fellow managers, the only question we ask is the investment profile of the branch. Increasing our investment is important for the Bank but we must not forget the capabilities of our members, increasing investment must not be our main objective. We are educated in the Grameen Bank that our primary consideration is the welfare of our members, but in many instances investment has become primary and members are becoming secondary. If we continue with our present attitudes then the result will be serious for a poor country like Bangladesh (report of one manager, Grameen Bank, March 1993; my own translation from Bangla).

The increase in loan investment is also reflected in the Year-Wise loan disbursement profile of the study branch. Figure 5 shows the

investment profile which has been increased more than three-fold between 1991 and 1993. In addition, in my study village the pressure from fellow members and coercion from bank workers in the loan center for weekly repayment burdens many women to accept different types of loans from the Grameen Bank in order to maintain the regularities of weekly payment of instalments on previous loans. Such lending processes contribute to a spiraling debt cycle in which many members in the study area feel they have become entrapped.

8. CONCLUSION

In this paper I have illustrated the Grameen Bank's micro-lending operation structure among poor women members in a rural community of Bangladesh and analyzed the process through which high investment and recovery rates of micro-loans are achieved and maintained in the study village. The analysis of this paper exposes a gulf between the ideology and vision, i.e., the public transcript of the Bank and its practices in the field. The bank workers in the grass-root loan operation dilute institutional ideology to achieve and maintain "programmatically success." The dilution of ideology brings paradoxical consequences for borrowers, bank workers and for other members in the society. It contributes to the development of the hidden transcript of the program. Most previous studies on Grameen Bank micro-credit have focused on quantitative indicators of the program, i.e., the numbers of borrowers incorporated, amounts of loans invested among these members and recovered from them. The performance of the Bank based on these indicators has established it as a successful financial institution lending to poor women. However, the empirical data presented in the paper paint a different picture,¹⁸ and call for more qualitative research on micro-credit programs for a better understanding of the processes.

In recent years the most important criterion for success of micro-credit programs is determined by their ability to achieve financial sustainability which is a desirable concern. But, at the same time, the service—providing institutions must also consider whether the attainment of such sustainability involves too large a cost in terms of borrowers, socio-economic impoverishment. If the aspirations for financial sustainability and the objective of serving poor women are contradictory, it is likely the latter will be

sacrificed, especially when the donor and international development community's attitude and support reward the former.

The micro-credit and micro-enterprise development projects are going to be "the" significant component of the 21st century's development initiatives in both poor and industrialized

countries. The experience of renowned institutions such as the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh documented in my research will broaden the understanding of policy makers about the micro-lending process and will provide for a fuller comprehension of development initiative impacts.

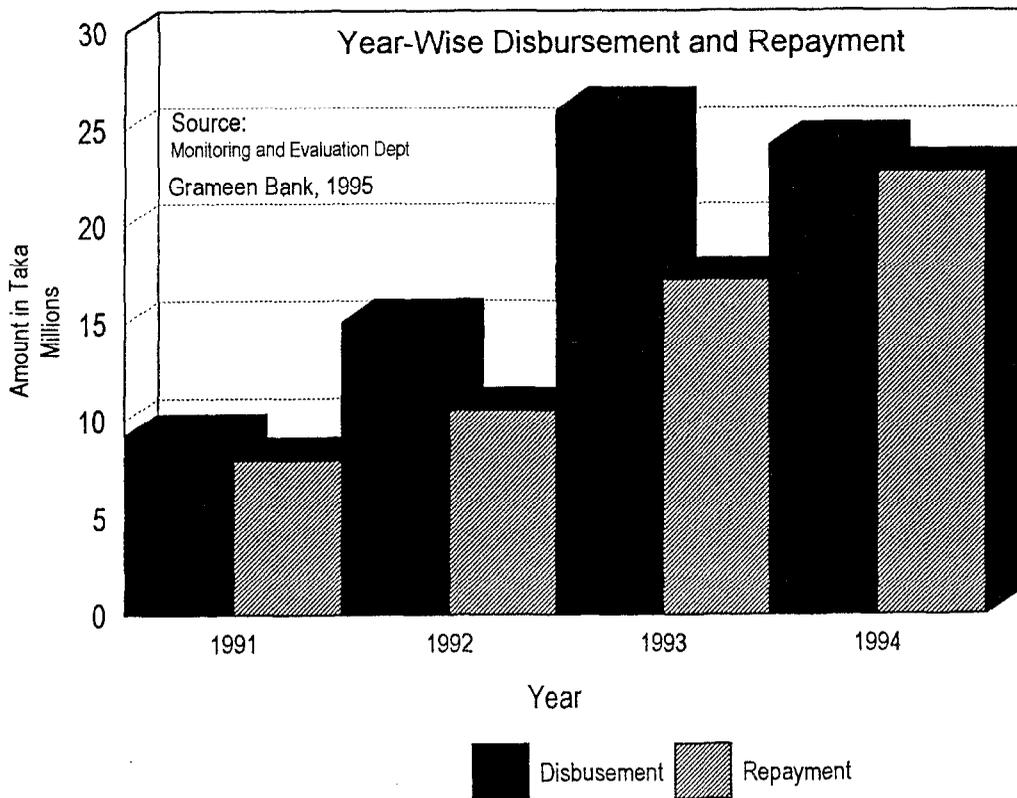


Figure 5. 1991-94 Year-wise disbursement and repayment in the study branch.

NOTES

1. I use the expression 'programmatic success' from my personal communication with Dr. Nancy Horn, a micro-enterprise specialist with the Opportunity International, Chicago, USA. Here, programmatic success refers to quantitative indicators, i.e., number of borrowers recruited for the program, amounts of loans invested among these borrowers and recovered from them.

2. The exclusion of males is also being reported in the 1993 and 1994 Annual Report of the Grameen Bank. In 1994, there were 62601 female members and 'zero' male members in the Mymensingh zone (the last zone the Bank established in the 1990s).

3. For the anonymity of the informants their identity is codified numerically and their fictitious names are used instead real names

4. The concept 'purdah' usually means seclusion of women or their veiling. In this context, purdah also means that a woman must not see or talk to other males who are not related to her by blood or marriage relations.

5. The target group of the Grameen Bank must not own more than half an acre of land. But in practice there are many members who are allowed to be member from a non-target group. In my study village there are nine members who own more than two acres

of land. The inclusion of members from non-target groups is found in other studies (Matin, 1997) and admitted by the Grameen Bank itself (Grameen Bank, 1995).

6. For *Sixteen Decisions* see Dr. Yunus, 1997, p. 19.

7. In order to get formal recognition as a Grameen group all members must learn and memorize rules and regulations of the Bank. When a group is ready then they are tested orally by a superior officer of the bank and must pass the test to get formal recognition.

8. The term "violence" in the context of this paper includes a range of responses, from verbal aggression to physical assault, e.g. beating.

9. The first two strategies are commonly used to resolve individual weekly defaulting problems, whereas the third and fourth are seldom used. During my ten month stay in the village during which I attended more than 100 centre meetings, I experienced three cases in which peers used the last strategy to cover the defaulter's instalment.

10. It is commonly believed in the study village that when a person gets angry then he/she is no longer the same person because the *Saitan* (devil) takes control over the angry person's actions.

11. Rani was one of the first Grameen members in the village who established two loan centres on her own homestead courtyard and recruited most members in these centres, including Yuri.

12. In the study village women commonly receive two types of investment loans, i.e., General and Seasonal.

Women are also allowed to borrow from their Group Fund.

13. When loans are approved for a specific purpose, but subsequently are used for other purpose, e.g., both income generation or consumption, I consider it as "diversion of loans".

14. The government of Bangladesh exports unskilled and skilled manpower to many countries in the world. It is the manpower broker agencies who arrange this export. These agencies charge interested candidates a large fee. In the study region it is common for people to travel to other countries to sell their labor.

15. Taka is the name for the Bangladesh currency. At the time of my fieldwork 42 taka was equivalent to one US dollar.

16. In Summer 1997 I returned to Bangladesh for follow-up research and found that the Grameen Bank had modified repayment terms. Now the interest payments are spread over 50 weeks and accepted with the instalment payments. Borrowers in the study village are happy about the new system, but only with more time will we be able to study the impact of this change on the borrowers.

17. At the end of every month the managers of the branch must send a descriptive report to the Head Office. This report contains a description of the situation of the branch. In the early 1990s many of the report managers described in detail their strategies for increasing branch investment.

18. Recently, a few other studies have documented similar patterns—see Goetz and Sen Gupta, 1996; Todd, 1997; Matin, 1997; Ito, 1997.

REFERENCES

- Arnes, J. and Van Beurden, J. (1977) *Jaghirapur—Poor Peasant and Women in a Bangladesh Village*. Third World Publications, Amsterdam.
- Awal, M. A. (1994) Reaffirming subaltern organizational praxis in transmodernity: a study of the Grameen Bank. PhD Dissertation, The Faculty of College of Communication, Ohio University.
- Aziz, A. K. M. (1979) *Kinship in Bangladesh*. Monograph Series no. 1, ICCDR, Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- Bernasek, A. (1992) Essays on the microeconomics of credit and Households. PhD dissertation, Department of Economics, The University of Michigan, USA.
- Blanchet, T. (1984) *Women, Pollution and Marginality: Meanings and Rituals of Birth in Rural Bangladesh*. University Press, Dhaka.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990) *The Logic of Practice*. Polity Press, Oxford.
- Chandler, F. A. (1993) *Participation as Process—Process as Growth: What We Can Learn From Grameen Bank Bangladesh*. Grameen Trust, Dhaka.
- Goetz, M. and Sen Gupta, R. (1996) Who takes the credit? Gender power and control over loan use in rural credit programs in Bangladesh. *World Development* 24(1), 45–64.
- Grameen Bank (1994) *Annual Report*. Grameen Bank, Dhaka.
- Grameen Bank (1995) Decisions from the 1995 Zonal Managers Conference, Grameen Bank Head Office, Mirpur, Dhaka, August 16, 17 and 18.
- Gramsci, A. (1971) *Selection from Prison Notebooks*. Lawrence and Wishart, London.
- Hashemi, S., Schuler, S.R. and Riley, A.P. (1996) Rural credit programs and women's empowerment in Bangladesh. *World Development* 24, 645–653.
- Hossain, M. (1988) Credit for Alleviation of Rural Poverty: The Grameen Bank in Bangladesh. Research Report 65. International Food Policy Research Institute.
- Ito, S. (1997) The Grameen Bank and poverty reduction. Ph.D., Thesis in Progress, IDS, Sussex, U.K.
- Jansen, E. (1988) *Rural Bangladesh: Competition for Scarce Resources*. University Press, Dhaka.
- Kotalova, J. (1993) *Belonging to Others: Cultural Construction of Womanhood Among Muslims in a Village in Bangladesh*. Uppsala Studies in Cultural Anthropology 19, Uppsala.

- Mandelbaum, D. (1988) *Women's Seclusion and Men's Honour: Sex Roles in North India, Bangladesh and Pakistan*. University of Arizona Press, Tucson.
- Matin, I. (1997) The renegotiation of joint liability: notes for Madhuphur. In *Who Needs Credit*, eds G. Wood and I. Sharif, pp. 262–270. University Press, Dhaka.
- MCS (Microcredit Summit) (1996) Draft Declaration, August 1996. Result Educational Fund, Washington, USA.
- Mizan, N.A. (1994) *In Quest of Empowerment: The Grameen Bank Impact on Women's Power and Status*. University Press, Dhaka.
- Morduch, J. (1997) *The Microfinance Revolution*. Department of Economics, Harvard University.
- Rahman, A. (1992) Notions of children, fertility, and contraception in the domestic domain: an anthropological study in a Bangladesh village. M.Phil Thesis, Oslo University, Oslo.
- Rahman, R.I. (1986) Impact of Grameen Bank on the Situation of Poor Rural Women. Working Paper No. 1, Grameen Bank Evaluation Project. BIDS, Dhaka.
- Schuler, S. and Hashemi, S. (1994) Credit programs, women's empowerment, and contraceptive use in rural Bangladesh. *Studies in Family Planning* 25, 65–76.
- Schuler, S. R., Hashemi, S. and Riley, A. P. (1997) Men's violence against women in rural Bangladesh: undermined or exacerbated by Microcredit Programs? Paper Presented at the 1997 Population Association of America Annual Meetings, Washington, DC March 1997.
- Scott, J. (1990) *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. Yale University Press, New Haven.
- Sen, A. K. (1990) Gender and corporative conflicts. In *Persistent Inequalities: Women in World Development*, ed. I. Tinker, pp. 123–149, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Shehabuddin, R. (1992) *Empowering Rural Women: The Impact of Grameen Bank in Bangladesh*. Grameen Bank, Dhaka.
- Todd, H. (1997) *Women at the Center: Grameen Borrowers After One Decade*. University Press, Dhaka.
- White, S. C. (1992) *Arguing with the Crocodile: Gender and Class in Bangladesh*. Zed Books, London.
- Wood, G. and Sharif, I. (1997) *Who Needs Credit? Poverty and Finance in Bangladesh*. University Press Limited, Dhaka.
- Yunus, M. (1994a) *Banking on the Poor*. Grameen Bank, Dhaka.
- Yunus, M. (1994b) *Grameen Bank As I See it*. Grameen Bank, Dhaka.
- Yunus, M. (1995) *New Development Options Towards the 21st Century*. Grameen Bank, Dhaka.
- Yunus, M. (1997) The Grameen Bank story: rural credit in Bangladesh. In *Reasons For Hope: Instructive Experiences in Rural Development*, eds A. Krishna, N. Uphoff and M. J. Esman, pp. 9–24. Kumarian Press, London.
- Zaman, H. (1997) *Violence Against Women in Bangladesh: Structural and Systemic Issues*. Forthcoming Monograph Series, Fall 1997, Life and Peace Institute, Uppsala.