DEVELOPMENT AS CONSCIENTIZATION

The Case of Nijera Kori in Bangladesh
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Foreword, by Professor Md. Anisur Rahman
## CONTENTS

List of Illustrations ................................................................. x
Authors .................................................................................. xix
Abbreviations .......................................................................... xx
FOREWORD, by Professor Md. Anisur Rahman ............................. xxi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................... xxii

CHAPTER I: DEVELOPMENT AS CONSCIENTIZATION ......................... 1
  UNDERSTANDING DEVELOPMENT: AS RIGHT ................................ 1
  UNDERSTANDING CONSCIENTIZATION: AS ROUTES TO DEVELOPMENT .... 7

CHAPTER II: NIJERA KORI AS LABORATORY TO UNDERSTAND PROCESS OF
CONSCIENTIZATION ................................................................... 12
  ORGANIZED EFFORT OF PURSUING CONSCIENTIZATION: THE NIJERA KORI .... 12
    Nijera Kori: The Beginning ................................................... 12
    Mission, Objectives, and Target Group of Nijera Kori ..................... 13
  NIJERA KORI’S CONSCIENTIZATION EFFORTS ............................ 15
    Landless organization and formation ......................................... 15
    Training ................................................................................ 15
    Cultural activities .................................................................... 16
  ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT OF NIJERA KORI .................... 17
    Management of Nijera Kori ................................................... 17
    Planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting system of Nijera Kori .... 20
    Working areas of Nijera Kori .................................................. 22

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY .......................................................... 26
  RESEARCH OBJECTIVE ................................................................ 26
  OVERALL RESEARCH DESIGN ..................................................... 27
    Identification and Selection of Indicators, Variables, and Broad Components .... 28
    The Pilots, Mid-study Presentation, and Modification of Instruments .......... 30
    Tools and Methods .................................................................. 30
    Treatment of Indicators, Variables, and Components ........................... 31
    An example ............................................................................ 31
    Comparative Study Design ..................................................... 34
    Schema of Measurement of Change Attributable to NK ....................... 34
    Sample Design ...................................................................... 35

CHAPTER IV: PROFILES: PARTICIPANTS .................................................. 39
  DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE ......................................................... 39
    Sex Ratio ............................................................................... 39
    Age Distribution .................................................................... 39
    Dependency Ratio .................................................................... 39
    Household Size ...................................................................... 40
  SOCIAL PROFILE ...................................................................... 40
    Educational Profile ................................................................... 40
  ECONOMIC PROFILE .............................................................. 41
    Occupational Profile .............................................................. 41
    Income Status ........................................................................ 41
    Poverty Status ........................................................................ 41
CHAPTER VI: CONSCIENTIZATION: WHO THINKS WHAT
CONSCIENTIZATION: MEANING WHAT? ............................................. 51
Variables and Indicators Used ............................................................. 51
AGGREGATE CONSCIENTIZATION: OVERALL SCENARIO ............... 53

CHAPTER VII: CONSCIENTIZATION: ABOUT RIGHTS
CONSCIENTIZATION ABOUT RIGHTS: OVERALL SCENARIO .......... 57
Conscientization about Rights: Variables and Indicators Used ............. 57
Conscientization about Rights: Scores and Methods ........................ 58
Conscientization about Rights: Main Sources of Knowledge ............. 59
Is Knowledge about Rights Have Been Translated into Practice? ......... 60
CONSCIENTIZATION ABOUT RIGHTS: SCENARIOS BASED ON INDICATORS 63
Knowledge about Demanding Food ................................................. 64
Knowledge about Demanding Cloth ................................................. 66
Knowledge about Demanding Shelter ............................................. 67
Knowledge about Demanding Education ......................................... 68
Knowledge about Demanding Health ............................................. 70
Knowledge about Practicing Democratic Rights .............................. 71
Knowledge about Rights on Land / Agriculture ............................. 73
Knowledge about Wage Bargaining ............................................... 75
Knowledge about Elements of Insecurity ........................................ 76
Knowledge on Legal Age at Marriage ............................................. 79
CONSCIENTIZATION GAP IN RIGHTS: WHERE TO EMPHASIS? ....... 81
What Means Conscientization Gap (CG)? ...................................... 81
Conscientization Gap in Rights: Overall Situation ........................... 81
Conscientization Gap in Rights: Among NK Members ........................ 82
Conscientization Gap in Rights: Among non-members in NK program area .... 83
Conscientization Gap in Rights: Among poor in non-program area ....... 84
CHAPTER VIII: CONSCIENTIZATION ABOUT FUNDAMENTALISM.................86
CONSCIENTIZATION ABOUT FUNDAMENTALISM: OVERALL SCENARIO...........86
Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Indicators used........................................86
Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Scores and Methods..............................88
CONSCIENTIZATION ABOUT FUNDAMENTALISM:
SCENARIOS BASED ON INDICATORS.................................................................92
Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Women empowerment is not harmful
for the society.................................................................93
Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Women leadership is acceptable..............93
Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Women should be encouraged to go to
school .............................................................................94
Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Women should not wear burkha..............95
Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Muslims should not participate in
mehfils/wazz where political issues are discussed more than religious issues............96
Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Muslim women should not participate in
talim ...............................................................................96
Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Muslim should not encourage to call for
Jihad .................................................................................97
Conscientization about Fundamentalism: State should not patronize jihadis ............98
Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Muslim should not promote tablig-jamats....98
Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Kadianis/Ahmadias should not be declared
as non-Muslims .................................................................99
Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Religious establishment of others (temples,
churches, pagodas) should not be demolished ..........................................................101
Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Those who do not believe in our religion
should not be punished..............................................................101
Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Killing of those who do not believe in our
religion is not justified .............................................................102
Conscientization about Fundamentalism: State should not run according to Islamic
sharia rule .........................................................................103
Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Banking should not run under Islamic
sharia ................................................................................103
Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Religion-based political process/parties
should not flourish and become stronger in this community .......................................104
Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Fatwa is not a good religious practice ......105
Conscientization about Fundamentalism: People of other religion should not be seen
inferior .............................................................................105
Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Islam shall not be the state religion ..........106
Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Replacement of 'secularism by Islam shall
be the State religion’ in the Constitution was not appropriate/correct .........................106
Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Religious leader should not run the country ...107
Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Religious politics is not problem free ......108
Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Madrasa/Kawmi madrasah is not better
than mainstreamed ..............................................................108
CONSCIENTIZATION GAP IN FUNDAMENTALISM: WHERE TO EMPHASIZE? ....109
What Means Conscientization Gap (CG)? .................................................................109
Conscientization Gap in Fundamentalism: Overall situation ..................................110
Conscientization Gap in Fundamentalism: Among NK members (NK-E) ..................110
Conscientization Gap in Fundamentalism: Among non-members in NK program area
(NK-EC) .............................................................................112
Conscientization Gap in Fundamentalism: Among non-members in non-program
area (NK-C) ........................................................................113
CHAPTER IX: CONSCIENTIZATION ABOUT WORLDVIEW ................................................. 115
CONSCIENTIZATION ABOUT WORLDVIEW: OVERALL SCENARIO .......................... 115
Conscientization about Worldview: Indicators used .................................................. 115
Conscientization about Worldview: Scores and Methods ......................................... 115
Conscientization about Worldview: Main Sources of Knowledge ............................. 119
CONSCIENTIZATION ABOUT WORLDVIEW: SCENARIOS BASED ON INDICATORS ... 119
Conscientization about Worldview: Gulf-war ......................................................... 120
Conscientization about Worldview: Afghanistan-war ............................................. 121
Conscientization about Worldview: Palestine Conflicts ......................................... 122
Conscientization about Worldview: Globalization .................................................. 123
Conscientization about Worldview: Negative Impacts of Globalization .................. 124
Conscientization about Worldview: Cultural Aggression ....................................... 124
Conscientization about Worldview: 9/11 (twin tower) ......................................... 125
Conscientization about Worldview: World Bank .................................................... 126
Conscientization about Worldview: International Monetary Fund .......................... 127
Conscientization about Worldview: World Trade Organization ............................. 128
Conscientization about Worldview: Imperialism .................................................... 128
Conscientization about Worldview: Colonialism .................................................... 129
Conscientization about Worldview: Apartheid (South Africa) ............................... 130
Conscientization about Worldview: Computer ...................................................... 131
Conscientization about Worldview: Information Technology (IT) ......................... 132
Conscientization about Worldview: Development is Possible Without Foreign Aid .... 133
Conscientization about Worldview: Gas Export Issue ........................................... 133
Conscientization about Worldview: TATA’s Investment ........................................ 134
Conscientization about Worldview: Lebanon War ................................................. 135
Conscientization about Worldview: Kansat movement .......................................... 136
Conscientization about Worldview: Fulbari movement ........................................... 137
CONSCIENTIZATION GAP IN WORLDVIEW: WHERE TO EMPHASIZE? .............. 138
What Means Conscientization Gap (CG)? ............................................................... 138
Conscientization Gap in Worldview: Overall Situation ........................................... 138
Conscientization Gap in Worldview: Among NK members (NK-E) ......................... 139
Conscientization Gap in Worldview: Among non-members in NK program area (NK-EC) .................................................................................................................. 139
Conscientization Gap in Worldview: Among poor in non-program area (NK-C) ....... 140

CHAPTER X: WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: MOBILITY AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN .......................................................... 143
MOBILITY AND VIOLENCE: ISSUES FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT ................. 143
MOBILITY OF WOMEN: OVERALL SCENARIO ...................................................... 145
Women’s Mobility: Markets ..................................................................................... 152
Women’s Mobility: Government Offices, Union Parishad ...................................... 152
Women’s Mobility: School and Hospital ................................................................ 153
Women’s Mobility: Shalish/Arbitration ................................................................. 154
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ............................................................................. 156

CHAPTER XI: ACCESS STATUS: WHO GETS WHAT ............................................. 160
ACCESS STATUS: VARIABLES AND INDICATORS USED ................................. 160
ACCESS STATUS: SCORES AND METHODS ......................................................... 161
ACCESS TO LOCAL POWER STRUCTURE: INDICATORS USED ....................... 163
Access to Local Power Structure: Overall Status ................................................... 163
Access to Union Parishad ....................................................................................... 163
Access to School Managing Committee ............................................................... 164
Access to Market Management Committee ......................................................... 164
Access to Project Committee .................................................................................. 165
Access to Other Committees......................................................................................... 165
ACCESS TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS AND CIVIC GROUPS:
INDICATORS USED ........................................................................................................... 166
  Access to Local Government Institutions and Civic Groups: Overall Status................. 166
  Access to TNO office ..................................................................................................... 166
  Access to Land and Settlement Office ......................................................................... 167
  Access to Banks ........................................................................................................... 167
  Access to Police Stations .............................................................................................. 168
  Access to Local Courts ................................................................................................. 168
  Access to Fisheries Office ............................................................................................ 169
  Access to Water Development Board Office ............................................................... 169
  Access to Palli Bidyut Samiti ....................................................................................... 170
  Access to Other Civic Groups ....................................................................................... 170
ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT SERVICES/PUBLIC RESOURCES: INDICATORS USED .... 171
  Access to Government Services/Public Resources: Overall Status ............................ 171
  Access to Public Health Facilities (DH, THC, MCWC) ................................................. 171
  Access to Sanitation (Latrine) Program ...................................................................... 172
  Access to Education (school) Institutions .................................................................. 172
  Access to Credit Program ......................................................................................... 173
  Access to Safety Net Provisions: Old Age Pension Scheme, FFW, VGF ..................... 173
  Access to Khas Land ................................................................................................... 174
  Access to Khas Water Bodies ...................................................................................... 175

CHAPTER XII: WELL-BEING STATUS ........................................................................... 177
INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................. 177
COMPOSITE WELL-BEING SCORE ANALYSIS .............................................................. 180
BROADER INDICATOR-WISE WELL-BEING STATUS .................................................. 182
  Food Security ............................................................................................................ 182
  Health ......................................................................................................................... 183
  Security/Safety (law and order) ................................................................................ 183
  Social Participation ................................................................................................... 184
  Community Status ................................................................................................... 184
  Education ................................................................................................................. 185
  Housing ..................................................................................................................... 186
  Asset .......................................................................................................................... 186
  Durable ..................................................................................................................... 187
  Income and Expenditure ......................................................................................... 187
  Water and Sanitation ............................................................................................... 188
  Women Empowerment ........................................................................................... 188
GROSS, NET CHANGE AND SPILL-OVER EFFECT .................................................... 189
GAPS IN WELL-BEING: SCOPES FOR IMPROVEMENT ............................................ 192
SAVINGS GROUP: A UNIQUE INITIATIVE .................................................................. 204

CHAPTER XII: KEY LEARNING .................................................................................. 209

Annex A: Survey-based Data Tables .............................................................................. 212
Annex B: Data Collection Instrument ........................................................................... 252
Glossary ......................................................................................................................... 293
References .................................................................................................................... 297
Index .............................................................................................................................. 301
Dedicated to
the people
who, against all odds,
are fighting relentlessly
for a better Bangladesh,

THE MEMBERS OF NIJERA KORI
ILLUSTRATIONS

List of Figure

Figure 1: A pyramid of poverty concepts ................................................................. 3
Figure 2: Deprivation trap ...................................................................................... 4
Figure 3: Group structure ...................................................................................... 15
Figure 4: Training structure .................................................................................. 15
Figure 5: Organogram of Nijera Kori .................................................................. 19
Figure 6: Nijera Kori: The committees and their activities ................................. 20
Figure 7: Planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting system of Nijera Kori 22
Figure 8: Visualization of the overall research design ........................................... 27
Figure 9: Five distinct phases of the research ....................................................... 28
Figure 10: Male-Female distribution in the sample ................................................ 39
Figure 11: Sex Ratio ............................................................................................... 39
Figure 12: Household size ..................................................................................... 40
Figure 13: Years with NK ....................................................................................... 42
Figure 14: Membership status in NK samitee ......................................................... 42
Figure 15: Percentage distribution of areas in sample village (5q.km.) .................. 47
Figure 16: Percentage distribution of population in sample village ....................... 47
Figure 17: Percentage distribution of no. of HH in sample village ....................... 47
Figure 18: Electrification Status in sample village ................................................ 47
Figure 19: Percentage distribution of distance from Dhaka City (km) from sample village .................................................. 48
Figure 20: Percentage distribution of distance between upazila HQ and sample village (km) .......................................................... 48
Figure 21: Percentage distribution of distance between UP office (km) and sample villages .......................................................... 48
Figure 22: Percentage distribution of distance between sample village and upazila health complex (km) .......................................................... 48
Figure 23: Percentage distribution of time requirement to go to Dhaka City from sample villages (by bus in hour) ......................... 49
Figure 24: Conscientization: Overall status ............................................................ 53
Figure 25: Component wise score of conscientiation ........................................... 54
Figure 26: Gaps to attain the maximum level of conscientization among NK-E .... 55
Figure 27: Overtime score on Conscientization among NK-E ............................... 56
Figure 28: Score of Knowledge about Rights: Overall situation .......................... 58
Figure 29: Prime practice level of knowledge gain on rights issues ....................... 60
Figure 30: Score of knowledge about demanding food ......................................... 64
Figure 31: Main source of knowledge about demanding food (as %) ..................... 65
Figure 32: Practice level of knowledge about demanding food ............................. 65
Figure 33: Score of knowledge about demanding cloth ......................................... 66
Figure 34: Main source of knowledge about demanding clothing (as %) ............... 66
Figure 35: Practice level of knowledge about demanding cloth ............................ 67
Figure 36: Score of knowledge about demanding shelter ...................................... 67
Figure 37: Main source of knowledge about demanding shelter (as %) ............... 68
Figure 38: Practice level of knowledge about demanding shelter ........................ 68
Figure 39: Score of knowledge about demanding education .................................. 69
Figure 40: Main source of knowledge about demanding education (as %) ............ 69
Figure 41: Practice level of knowledge about demanding education ..................... 69
Figure 42: Score of knowledge about demanding health ....................................... 70
Figure 43: Main source of knowledge about demanding health (as %) ............... 70
Figure 44: Practice level of knowledge about demanding health .......................... 71
Figure 45: Score on knowledge about practicing democratic rights ............................................ 71
Figure 46: Main source of knowledge on practicing democratic rights ........................................ 72
Figure 47: Practice level of knowledge about practicing democratic rights .................................. 72
Figure 48: Score on knowledge about land/agriculture ............................................................... 73
Figure 49: Main source of knowledge on land/agriculture rights ............................................... 73
Figure 50: Practice level of knowledge about Land/Agriculture ................................................ 74
Figure 51: Score on knowledge about wage bargaining ............................................................. 75
Figure 52: Main source of knowledge about wage bargaining issues ......................................... 75
Figure 53: Practice level of knowledge about wage bargaining .................................................. 76
Figure 54: Score on knowledge about elements of insecurity ...................................................... 77
Figure 55: Main knowledge source on elements of insecurity .................................................... 78
Figure 56: Practice level of knowledge about elements of insecurity ......................................... 79
Figure 57: Score on knowledge about legal age at marriage ...................................................... 79
Figure 58: Knowledge on legal age at marriage ........................................................................ 80
Figure 59: Main knowledge source on legal age at marriage ..................................................... 80
Figure 60: Practice level of knowledge about others issues (legal age at marriage) ..................... 80
Figure 61: Conscientization Gaps (CG) in rights ........................................................................ 81
Figure 62: Conscientization Gaps in Rights: Among Nijera Kori members ................................. 82
Figure 63: Conscientization Gaps in Rights: Among non-members in Nijera Kori program area .... 83
Figure 64: Conscientization Gaps in Rights: Among poor in non-program area ......................... 84
Figure 65: Score on Fundamentalism: overall status ................................................................... 88
Figure 66: Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Gaps in the indicators ............................... 91
Figure 67: Conscientization about fundamentalism Women empowerment is not harmful for Society .... 93
Figure 68: Conscientization about fundamentalism: Women leadership is acceptable ................ 94
Figure 69: Conscientization about fundamentalism: Women should not be encouraged to go to school ...................................................................................................................................... 94
Figure 70: Conscientization about fundamentalism: Women should not be wear burkha ............... 95
Figure 71: Conscientization about fundamentalism: Muslim should not participate in mehfil/wazz where political issues are discussed more than religious issues ......................................................... 96
Figure 72: Conscientization about fundamentalism: Muslim women should not participate in talim .... 96
Figure 73: Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Muslim should not encourage call for Jihad .... 97
Figure 74: Conscientization about Fundamentalism: State should not patronize Jihadis ............... 98
Figure 75: Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Muslim should not promote tabhig-Jamat .......... 98
Figure 76: Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Kadiani/Ahmadia should not be declared a non-Muslim .................................................................................................................................. 100
Figure 77: Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Religious establishment of others should not be demolished .................................................................................................................................. 101
Figure 78: Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Those who do not believe in our religion should not be punished .................................................................................................. 101
Figure 79: Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Killing of those who do not believe in our religion is not justified ........................................................................................................ 102
Figure 80: Conscientization about Fundamentalism: State should not run according to Islamic Sharia rule .................................................................................................................................. 103
Figure 81: Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Banking should not run Islamic Sharia .......... 103
Figure 82: Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Religion-based political process/parties should not flourish and become stronger in this community .......................................... 104
Figure 83: Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Fatwa is not a good religious practice ............ 105
Figure 84: Conscientization about Fundamentalism: People of other religion should not be seen inferior .................................................................................................................................. 105
Figure 85: Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Islam shall not be the state religion ............. 106
Figure 86: Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Replacement of ‘secularism’ by ‘Islam’ in the Constitution was not appropriate ................................................................. 107
Figure 87: Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Religious leaders should not run the country ...... 107
Figure 88: Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Religious politics is not problem free ......... 108
Figure 89: Conscientization about Fundamentalism: Madrasa/Kawmi madrasa is not better than mainstreamed .......................................................................................................................... 109
Figure 90: Conscientization Gap in FUNDAMENTALISM: Overall situation .......................................................................................................................... 110
Figure 91: Conscientization gaps in Fundamentalism: Among Nijera Kori members .............................................................. 111
Figure 92: Conscientization gaps in Fundamentalism: Among non-member in NK program area ............................................................................................................. 112
Figure 93: Conscientization gaps in Fundamentalism: Among poor in non-program area .............................................................. 113
Figure 94: Score on worldview: Overall Status .......................................................................................................................... 115
Figure 95: Conscientization about worldview: Gulf-war .......................................................................................................................... 120
Figure 96 Gulf-War: Knowledge source .............................................................................................................................................. 121
Figure 97: Conscientization about worldview: Afghanistan-war .......................................................................................................................... 121
Figure 98: Afghanistan-war: Knowledge source .............................................................................................................................................. 122
Figure 99: Conscientization about worldview: Palestine conflict .......................................................................................................................... 122
Figure 100: Palestine conflict knowledge source .............................................................................................................................................. 122
Figure 101: Conscientization about worldview: Globalization .......................................................................................................................... 123
Figure 102: Globalization: Knowledge source .............................................................................................................................................. 123
Figure 103: Conscientization about worldview: Negative impacts of globalization .......................................................................................................................... 124
Figure 104: Negative impacts of globalization: Knowledge source .......................................................................................................................... 124
Figure 105: Conscientization about worldview: Cultural aggression .......................................................................................................................... 124
Figure 106: Cultural aggression: Knowledge source .............................................................................................................................................. 125
Figure 107: Conscientization about worldview: 9/11 (twin tower) .......................................................................................................................... 125
Figure 108: 9/11 (twin tower): Knowledge source .............................................................................................................................................. 126
Figure 109: Conscientization about worldview: World Bank .......................................................................................................................... 126
Figure 110: World Bank: Knowledge source .............................................................................................................................................. 126
Figure 111: Conscientization about worldview: International Monetary Fund (IMF) .......................................................................................................................... 127
Figure 112: International Monetary Fund: Knowledge source .............................................................................................................................................. 127
Figure 113: Conscientization about worldview: World Trade Centre .......................................................................................................................... 128
Figure 114: World Trade Organization: Knowledge source .............................................................................................................................................. 128
Figure 115: Conscientization about worldview: Imperialism .......................................................................................................................... 128
Figure 116: Imperialism: Knowledge source .............................................................................................................................................. 129
Figure 117: Conscientization about worldview: Colonialism .......................................................................................................................... 129
Figure 118: Colonialism: Knowledge source .............................................................................................................................................. 130
Figure 119: Conscientization about worldview: Apartheid (South Africa) .......................................................................................................................... 130
Figure 120: Apartheid (South Africa): Knowledge source .............................................................................................................................................. 130
Figure 121: Conscientization about worldview: Computer .............................................................................................................................................. 131
Figure 122: Computer: Knowledge source .............................................................................................................................................. 131
Figure 123: Conscientization about worldview: Information Technology .......................................................................................................................... 132
Figure 124: Information Technology: Knowledge source .............................................................................................................................................. 132
Figure 125: Conscientization about Worldview: Development is Possible without Foreign aid .......................................................................................................................... 133
Figure 126: Development is Possible without Foreign aid: Knowledge source .......................................................................................................................... 133
Figure 127: Conscientization about worldview: Gas export issues .......................................................................................................................... 133
Figure 128: Gas export issues: Knowledge source .............................................................................................................................................. 134
Figure 129: Conscientization about worldview: TATA’s investment .......................................................................................................................... 134
Figure 130: TATA’s Investment: Knowledge source .............................................................................................................................................. 135
Figure 131: Conscientization about worldview: Lebanon war .......................................................................................................................... 135
Figure 132: Lebanon war: Knowledge source .............................................................................................................................................. 135
Figure 133: Conscientization about worldview: Kansat .............................................................................................................................................. 136
Figure 134: Kansat: Knowledge source .............................................................................................................................................. 136
Figure 135: Conscientization about worldview: Fulbari movement .......................................................................................................................... 137
Figure 136: Fulbari movement: Knowledge source .............................................................................................................................................. 137
Figure 137: Conscientization Gap in worldview: Overall Status .......................................................................................................................... 138
Figure 138: Conscientization gaps in Worldview: Among Nijera Kori members .......................................................................................................................... 139
Figure 139: Conscientization in gaps Worldview: Among non-member in NK program area .......................................................................................................................... 140
Figure 140: Conscientization gaps in Worldview: Among poor in non-program area .......................................................................................................................... 141
Figure 141: Status of Women’s Mobility .............................................................................................................................................. 145
Figure 142: Women’s mobility by indicator: Can go alone .............................................................................................................................................. 146
### List of Tables

| Table 1: | Age Distribution ................................................................. | 39 |
| Table 2: | Education status .................................................................. | 40 |
| Table 3: | Occupational profile .......................................................... | 41 |
| Table 4: | Income distribution ............................................................... | 41 |
| Table 5: | Poverty Status (%) .................................................................. | 41 |
| Table 6: | Participation Status in NK programs ........................................ | 42 |
| Table 7: | Consequences of NK programs .................................................. | 42 |
| Table 8: | Income attributable to NK ...................................................... | 42 |
| Table 9: | Sample village characteristics (as on August 2007) ...................... | 45 |
| Table 10: | Village wise characteristics ..................................................... | 46 |
| Table 11: | Average and range of education institutions (in number) ............... | 49 |
| Table 12: | Nijera Kori in experimental villages .......................................... | 49 |
| Table 13: | Score, changes and spill-over effect on conscientization ............... | 54 |
| Table 14: | Assessing Knowledge about Rights: Variables and Indicators used ...... | 57 |
| Table 15: | Score, Changes and Spill-over Effect on Knowledge about Right ........ | 59 |
| Table 16: | Main sources of knowledge about rights ...................................... | 60 |
| Table 17: | Practice (prime activity) of knowledge gain on rights issues .......... | 61 |
| Table 18: | Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about Demanding Food (in percentage-points) | 64 |
| Table 19: | Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about Demanding Cloth (in percentage-points) | 66 |
| Table 20: | Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about Demanding shelter (in percentage-points) | 67 |
| Table 21: | Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about Demanding Education (in percentage-points) | 69 |
| Table 22: | Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about Demanding Health (in percentage-points) | 70 |
| Table 23: | Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about Practicing Democratic Rights (in percentage-points) | 71 |
| Table 24: | Knowledge on practicing democratic rights (score) ...................... | 72 |
| Table 25: | Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about Land/Agriculture (in percentage-points) | 73 |
| Table 26: | Knowledge score on rights on khas land and water bodies ............... | 74 |
| Table 27: | Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about wage bargaining (in percentage-points) | 75 |
| Table 28: | Knowledge on wage bargaining ................................................ | 75 |
| Table 29: | Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about elements of insecurity (in percentage-points) | 77 |
| Table 30: | Knowledge situation on elements of insecurity .......................... | 77 |
| Table 31: | The knowledge score on the broad-heads on elements of insecurity .... | 78 |
| Table 32: | Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about legal age at marriage (in percentage-points) | 79 |
| Table 33: | Score, Changes and Spill-over Effect on Conscientization about Fundamentalism | 90 |
| Table 34: | Conscientization about fundamentalism: Male-Female dimensions .......... | 91 |
| Table 35: | Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about Women empowerment is not harmful for the society (in percentage-points) | 93 |
| Table 36: | Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about Women leadership is acceptable (in percentage-points) | 94 |
| Table 37: | Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about women should be encouraged to go to school (in percentage-points) | 94 |
| Table 38: | Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about women should not wear burkha (in percentage-points) | 95 |
Table 39: Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about *Muslims should not participate in mehﬁls/wazz where ................................................................. 96
Table 40: Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about *Muslims women should not participate in talim (in percentage-points) ........................................................................ 97
Table 41: Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about *Muslims should not encourage to call for jihad (in percentage-points) ........................................................................ 97
Table 42: Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about *state should not patronize jihadists (in percentage-points) ........................................................................ 98
Table 43: Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about *Muslims should not promote tablig-jama’ (in percentage-points) ................................................................. 99
Table 44: Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about *Kadianis/Ahmadias should not be declared as non-Muslims (in percentage-points) .......................................... 100
Table 45: Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about *Religious establishment of others (temples, churches, pagodas) should not be demolished ( in percentage-points) ................................................................. 101
Table 46: Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about *Those who do not believe in our religion should not be punished ( in percentage-points) ................................................................. 102
Table 47: Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about *Killing of those who do not believe in our religion is not justified ( in percentage-points) ................................................................. 102
Table 48: Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about *State should not run according to Islamic sharia rule (in percentage-points) ................................................................. 103
Table 49: Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about *Banking should not run under Islamic sharia (in percentage-points) ................................................................. 104
Table 50: Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about *Religion-based political process/parties should not flourish and become stronger in this community( in percentage-points) ................................................................. 104
Table 51: Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about *Fatwa is not a good religious practice ( in percentage-points) ........................................................................ 105
Table 52: Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about *People in other religion should not be seen inferior ( in percentage-points) ........................................................................ 105
Table 53: Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about *Islam shall not be the state religion ( in percentage-points) ........................................................................ 106
Table 54: Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about *Replacement of ‘secularism’ by Islam in the constitution was not appropriate/correct (in percentage-points) ................................................................. 107
Table 55: Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about *Religious leader should not run the country (in percentage-points) ................................................................. 107
Table 56: Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about *Religious politics is not problem free ( in percentage-points) ........................................................................ 108
Table 57: Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about *Madrasa/Kawmi madrasah is not better than mainstreamed ( in percentage-points) ........................................................................ 109
Table 58: Score, Changes and Spill-over Effect on Conscientization on Worldview .................................................................................. 117
Table 59: Knowledge score on worldview .................................................................................. 118
Table 60: Conscientization about worldview: Male-Female variation.................................................. 118
Table 61: Ranking of the sources of knowledge on worldview ................................................................ 119
Table 62: Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about Gulf-war (in percentage-points) ........ 120
Table 63: Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about Afghanistan-war (in percentage-points) .................................................................................. 121
Table 64: Changes and spillover effects on Knowledge about Palestine conﬂicts (in percentage-points) .................................................................................. 122
Table 65: Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about Globalization (in percentage-points) .................................................................................. 123
Table 66: Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about negative impacts of globalization (in percentage-points) .................................................................................. 124
Table 67: Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about cultural aggression (in percentage-points) .......................................................................................... 124
Table 68: Changes and Spill-over Effects on Knowledge about 9/11 (twin tower) (in percentage-points) .................................................................................. 125
Table 114: Food security status (in %): Before and current ........................................... 183
Table 115: Health status as well-being .................................................................................. 183
Table 116: Social participation as well-being ........................................................................ 184
Table 117: Community status as well-being ....................................................................... 185
Table 118: Education related issues of well-being ................................................................. 185
Table 119: Housing security as well-being ........................................................................... 186
Table 120: Asset ownership as well-being .......................................................................... 187
Table 121: Ownership of durable as well-being ................................................................. 187
Table 122: Income-expenditure as well-being ................................................................. 187
Table 123: Water-sanitation status as well-being ............................................................... 188
Table 124: Women empowerment ......................................................................................... 189
Table 125: Component wise changes over time ................................................................ 190
Table 126: Indicator wise changes over time: NK-E, NK-EC, NK-C .................................... 191
Table 127: Topmost score gap indicators by components and by observation categories .......... 193
Table 128: Well-being Score-gap: NK-E, NK-EC, NK-C (gap points: max component score-gap =100) ......................................................................................................................... 193
Table 129: What NK Members Think as ways of reducing well-being gap ......................... 194
Table 130: Savings, investment in economic activities and distribution of group fund: 2002 – 2007 .................................................................................................................................................................................. 204
Table 131: Dynamics of economic investments and group fund distribution: 2005 – 2007 .................................................................................................................................................................................. 205

List of Boxes

Box 1: Understanding Development ......................................................................................... 1
Box 2: Human development - the concept is larger than the index ........................................... 6
Box 3: Development as human right ........................................................................................ 7
Box 4: Conscientization: As Routes to Development ............................................................... 9
Box 5: NK: Facts and Figures about Organization .................................................................. 13
Box 6: Super goal and immediate objectives of “Social Mobilization, Voice and democracy Program (SMVDP)’’ ......................................................................................................................... 14
Box 7: Nijera Kori’s Conscientization Efforts ........................................................................ 16
Box 8: Working Areas of Nijera Kori ..................................................................................... 23
Box 9: Researchers’ Aim .......................................................................................................... 26
Box 10: Changes due to conscientization efforts of Nijera Kori ............................................... 53
Box 11: Changes due to conscientization efforts: Knowledge about Rights ............................... 58
Box 12: Does knowledge level on rights issues increases with years under programmatic intervention? ....................................................................................................................................... 61
Box 13: Is any relationship exists between poverty status and knowledge level on rights issues? 62
Box 14: Dictionary definition of Fundamentalism .................................................................. 86
Box 15: Indicators used to assess the score for conscientization about Fundamentalism ........ 87
Box 16: What is Fundamentalism? .......................................................................................... 87
Box 17: The Rise of Fundamentalism in Bangladesh ............................................................... 88
Box 18: The changes due to programmatic interventions: Knowledge about Rights ............... 89
Box 19: Indicators used to assess conscientization about worldview .................................... 115
Box 20: The changes due to programmatic interventions: Knowledge about Worldview ......... 116
Box 21: Women Empowerment in Bangladesh Constitution ................................................ 143
Box 22: Estimation procedure of Changes due to NK intervention ........................................ 149
Box 23: UN declaration on VAW ........................................................................................... 156
Box 24: The changes due to programmatic interventions: Access Scenario ......................... 161
Box 25: FGD with NK members, Subarner Char, Noakhali ..................................................... 197
Box 26: FGDs with NK members at Dhanbari (Tangail) and Kumerkhali (Kushtia) .................. 197
Box 27: Weaving Factory: Joint Economic Activity at Dhansrare ........................................... 206
List of Map

Map 1: Working Area: Nijera Kori ........................................................................................................... 24
Map 2: Sample areas (districts) ........................................................................................................... 36
MAP 3: Mobility Map of NK participant Women ........................................................................... 148
MAP 4: Mobility Map of Women in Control Village ................................................................... 149
Map 5: Trend analysis of activities in Suberner Char (Noakhali) .................................................. 201
Map 6: Trend Analysis of NK-E Activities: Consolidated Diagram ............................................. 203
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ABBREVIATIONS

BCC    Behavioral Change Through Communication
CG     Conscientization Gap
CPR    Common Property Resources
DCI    Data Collection Instrument
DCI    Direct Calorie Intake (method)
DH     District Hospital
F      Fundamentalism
FFW    Food for Work
FGD    Focus Group Discussion
GDP    Gross Domestic Product
HDI    Human Development Index
HDRC   Human Development Research Centre
HH     Household
IMF    International Monetary Fund
IT     Information Technology
KII    Key Informant Interview
KR     Knowledge about Rights
LGI    Local Government Institutions
MDG    Millennium Development Goals
MCWC   Maternal and Child Welfare Centre
N      Sample size
NA     Not Applicable
NGO    Non-Governmental Organizations
NK     Nijera Kori
NK-C   Nijera Kori Control (poor in non-programme area)
NK-E   Nijera Kori Experimental (members of Nijera Kori)
NK-EC  Nijera Kori Experimental-Control (non-member of Nijera Kori in program area)
PME    Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation
PBS    Palli Bidyut Samity (Rural Electricity Cooperative)
PC     Private Consumption
PRA    Participatory Rural Appraisal
PRSP   Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SMVDP  Social Mobilization, Voice and Democracy program (2001-2007)
SPC    State Provided Commodities
THC    Thana Health Complex
TNO    Thana Nirbahi (Executive) Officer
TV     Television
UN     United Nations
VAW    Violence Against Women
VGF    Vulnerable Group Feeding
WB     World Bank
WTO    World Trade Organization
WV     World View
Defining “development” is no easy task. Development is right. Increase in per capita income without distributive justice and within rising inequality is not development. True development is a process of inclusion of the excluded, but not an adverse inclusion. Development is about people, about expanding their choices to lead lives they value, about enlarging opportunities for full life which can only be guaranteed by empowering people, especially empowering the poor, distressed, deprived, destitute and marginalized people in all fronts. Therefore, the right to development to empower the excluded is the necessary precondition for sustainable development. True development is a freedom-mediated process of human development. These freedoms include political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees, and protective security. Ensuring free play of all these five types of freedom, in a most visible way, must be viewed as a natural precondition for empowerment.

Development is right – both constitutional and justiciable. It is about both knowledge about these human rights as well as about means and ways to apply these rights or realization of these rights by the poor and marginalized people for whom, under class society, consistent denial of these rights is a rule. Our understanding of development as conscientization rests on two issues: meaning of conscientization, and broad aspects of conscientization. The English term “conscientization” is a translation of the Portuguese term “conscientização, which is also translated as “consciousness raising”. This term was first coined successfully by Brazilian educator, activist, and theorist Paulo Freire in his 1970 seminal work, Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Conscientization refers to a type of learning which is focused on perceiving and exposing social, political and economic contradictions and injustices. Conscientization also includes taking actions against oppressive elements in one’s life as part of that learning.

Conscientization is a process by which the learner advances towards critical consciousness which is necessary for informed actions (social praxis) – the key goal of development education. Conscientization should not be equated with just consciousness raising because the latter may involve transmission of pre-selected knowledge (in congruence with “dominant culture”, “cultural hegemony”, “status quo” etc). Conscientization is the heart of liberatory education. Conscientization means breaking through prevailing mythologies to reach new levels of awareness – in particular, awareness of oppression, being an “object” of others’ will rather than a self-determining “subject”. This process of conscientization involves identifying contradictions in experience through dialogue and becoming part of the process of changing the world. It is based on the above analysis, we argue that conscientization-mediated development will be liberatory-development, and, thereby, will form the basis for real human (e) development. And, thus, is our urge to understand the essence of conscientization through how the most poor, vulnerable, marginalized people internalizes their rights (knowledge front) and how they build informed actions (practice front), and how far they move (as compared to the others who are not involved) in such process of conscientization.

It is of-course true that level of conscientization have increased among members of Nijera Kori. It can also be said emphatically that other members of the society outside Nijera Kori have also been positively affected by Nijera Kori movement. Another important finding needs to be noted very conspicuously that Nijera Kori members who have received financial supports from other NGOs improved their living standard better than who received no such
conscientization-oriented programmatic intervention. This fact clearly admits the positive role of finance in improving life. But economic inputs without conscientization does not work well, rather might worsen the situation. It has been seen that finance and conscientization catalyze each other- one works better in presence of the other. Actually financial assistance meets short run needs and conscientization brings permanent solutions to problems of life. Availability of resources expedites the action of conscientization to bring change in life.

Has conscientization-oriented interventions of Nijera Kori succeeded or failed? If succeeded, then to what extent? If failed, then failed to what extent? This study was devoted to find an answer to these questions and what has been found is mixed. However, it was distinct that conscientization works both in terms of internalization of reality and informed actions.

The accompanying study is an outcome of about two years of extensive hard work, involving the devoted time of our field team, commitment of the respondents- the members of Nijera Kori and the representatives of the common people in Bangladesh, sleepless nights of our in-house staff members of Human Development Research Centre- the coders, editors, transcribers, data entry personnel, system analyst, computer type setters, and of-course of cooks, drivers, security guards and cleaners.

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Should the analysis presented in the study be useful in understanding not only the conscientization process led by Nijera Kori in Bangladesh, but also the multidimensional and complex issues of development in a newer horizon the effort devoted would be worth.

Dhaka
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CHAPTER I
DEVELOPMENT AS CONSCIENTIZATION

UNDERSTANDING DEVELOPMENT: AS RIGHT

Defining “development” is no easy task. We all have intuitive notions of “development”. When we speak of a developed society, we draw a picture in our minds a society in which people are well fed and well clothed, possess access to a variety of commodities, have the luxury of some leisure and entertainment, and live in a healthy environment. In short, most of us would insist that a minimal requirement for a ‘developed’ nation is that the physical quality of life be high, and be so uniformly, rather than being restricted to an incongruously affluent minority (Ray 2003). The notion of good society goes further. We might stress political rights and freedoms, intellectual and cultural development, stability of the family, a low crime rate, and so on. However, economistic definition of development tends to insist that a high level of material well-being is probably a prerequisite for most other kinds of advancement. In the last few decades, the economistic yardstick of per capita gross domestic product (GDP) growth has come under fire from various quarters. Not many serious people now believe that per capita income is development. Development, in the broader sense of the term, should be viewed as an approach; it is about a view of the world.

Development is right. Increase in per capita income without distributive justice and within rising inequality is not development. True development is a process of inclusion of the excluded, but not an adverse inclusion. Development is about people, about expanding their choices to lead lives they value, about enlarging opportunities for full life which can only be guaranteed by empowering people, especially empowering the poor, distressed, deprived, destitute and marginalized people in all fronts. Realization of this approach of development requires empowerment of poor and marginalized people in the front of knowledge (about their rights and worldview) first and simultaneous actions to participate and own the process. And this itself is a never ending process of progress in spiral. In this process, the passive recipients of the benefits of development transform into active agents of development.

Therefore, the right to development to empower the excluded- the poor and deprived- is a necessary precondition for sustainable development. True development is human development, which is a freedom-mediated process. Human Development is about inclusion of the excluded in the process of development. In absence of this true development, the distressed and deprived persons can be featured as: person without a face; a subjugated identity; a lost identity; a redundancy; an appendage; a person born to eat last and least; a person born to live on left over; a person born to be uneducated; a person first to be fired and last to be hired; a person to be born and brought-up in an adverse environment; a person who

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1: Understanding Development</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development as</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Human Development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Expanding people’s choices to lead lives they value.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Freedom-mediated process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Transformation from deprivation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Addressing various faces of poverty (poverty due to): lack of income, hunger, low wage, unemployment, lack of shelter, lack of access to public resources (including khas land), ill health, lack of education, environmental hazards, lack of political freedom, lack of transparency guarantee, lack of protective security, marginalization (e.g., religious minorities, indigenous people, elderly people, disable people, poor women, slum dwellers, char people, rickshaw-van pullers, etc.), and mindset.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Inclusion of excluded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Empowering excluded by enlarging opportunities for full life.</td>
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is less than equal. In setting the true development in motion a real attitudinal change is warranted; traditionally fixed mind set needs to be changed; whole ‘ethics’ needs to be revisited- to create an enabling environment for the inclusion of the excluded, and for the empowerment of the poor and deprived.

True development is equivalent to ensuring opportunities for a full life to people, especially to those who are excluded- the poor, women, and deprived. Human development is a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy (Sen 1999). Thus, human development inherently assumes “integration” and beyond just “wealth”; requires removal of all sources of un-freedom; necessitates pro-active participation (not tokenism) of un-empowered in the process of substantive empowerment. It is important to note at this point that the discourse on empowerment is a complex one involving many dimensions of individual and social rights. Empowerment should not be reduced to legal rights or economic bargaining power only, because it has personal and cultural dimensions.

**Human development** and **poverty** (alleviation and/or reduction) are interrelated. Poverty is a multidimensional phenomena and accordingly there are a wide variety of approaches to its definition and measurement. Economists and policy analysts are more prone to focus on money-metric measures of poverty, based on the assumption that a person’s **material standard of living** largely determines their well-being. The poor are then defined or identified as those with a material standard of living as measured by income or expenditure below a certain level – the so-called **poverty line** (Atkinson 1987, 1989; Ravallion 1992). Practical problems, largely associated with the difficulty of accurately quantifying income or expenditure, have recently led economists to the exploration of alternative, non-monetary proxies for household welfare. Most pronounced amongst these is the use of household asset indexes; i.e. an aggregate measure of the access to and ownership of a specified articles of household attributes (Filmer and Pritchett 1998, Montgomery et al. 2000, Sahn and Stifel 2000).

It is widely recognised that poverty measures based on household income or expenditure reflect a static concept, offering only a limited picture of household well-being. In case of what might be considered transitory shocks to income, households may reduce the consumption of food or household expenditure on clothing or other items in order to preserve their asset holdings, such as land, housing or durables. If, however, shocks permanently affect welfare, households may run down their holdings of assets such as durables, jewellery, livestock or land. Agarwal (1991), examining the welfare impact of famine in Bangladesh, concludes that focusing exclusively on either asset ownership or food expenditure/nutritional levels/household expenditure may give a misleading picture of well-being. **Vulnerability** and **livelihood strategy** approaches to poverty assessment are seen as offering a more dynamic conception of poverty (Falkingham and Namazie 2002). They focus on the households’ ability to cope with shocks to living standards by incorporating measures of investments in human capital (health and education), physical investments (housing, equipment and land), social capital and claims on other assets (such as friendships and kinship networks), stores (food, money or valuables such as jewellery), as well as labour (Moser 1998, Bond and Mukherjee 2001).

Recognition that monetary measures are not all encompassing and fail to capture other important aspects of individual well-being, such as community resources, social relations, culture, personal security and the natural environment, have resulted in the development of a set of complementary indicators which aim to capture **human capabilities** (Sen 1985 1987,
McKinley 1997, Micklewright and Stewart 2001). Capability poverty focuses on an individual’s capacity to live a healthy life, free of avoidable morbidity, having adequate nourishment, being informed and knowledgeable, being capable of reproduction, enjoying personal security, and being able to participate freely and actively in society. Material resources at some level are generally necessary for some of these activities, but they are not sufficient. Measures that focus on capability poverty thus incorporate access to public services, assets and employment, as well as money-metric measures which reflect the ability to ‘purchase’ food, clothing and shelter. Capability poverty can be measured directly in terms of capabilities themselves; for example, the percentage of children who are underweight, or, indirectly, in terms of access to opportunities, or the means of capabilities, such as access to a trained health professional at birth and access to education and other public services. It has been argued that for any given country it should be difficult to predict or promise a significant reduction of mass poverty in the near future in a view of many factors which are not within the control of the society, no matter how mobilized its people are including internal and external resistances that should be expected to the very effort to promote people’s mobilization and self-determined development (Rahman 1989a).

Baulch (1996) has usefully described the progressive broadening of what is thought to constitute poverty in terms of a ‘pyramid of poverty concepts’. Each concept represents a dimension of well-being, and each conceptualization constitutes a different combination of dimensions, with the combinations getting broader and more complex (Figure 1). The traditional ‘economic’ conception of poverty ideally focuses on line three of Baulch’s pyramid; i.e. private consumption combined with common property resources and the consumption of state-provided commodities. However, difficulties of measuring consumption of state-provided commodities and access to common property resources often results in a focus on private consumption alone. At the other end of the spectrum, Sen (1999) sees freedom, autonomy and dignity as central and other concepts are relegated to a secondary level of importance. It should be noted that the more complex the conceptualization of poverty, the more difficult it is to operationalize. Thus, although Sen’s approach is useful in understanding the attributes of welfare, it is difficult to quantify or capture.

Figure 1: A pyramid of poverty concepts

Source: Baulch, 1996
Note: PC = private consumption; CPR = common property resources; SPC = state provided commodities

Alternative conceptualization of poverty is a burgeoning array of methodological approaches towards its assessment (McGee and Brock 2001). These include ethnographic investigations using classical anthropological methods (Scott 1985, McGee 1998), participatory poverty assessments (Norton et al. 2001), longitudinal village studies (Jayaraman and Lanjouw 1998), and conventional household surveys (Grosh and Munoz 1996, Grosh and Glewwe 2000). The relative merits of alternative conceptions and methodological approaches largely depend upon the purpose of the analysis of poverty and exclusion.
In understanding the relationships between development and poverty it would be appropriate to mention that the economistic idea about poverty is mostly narrowly defined one indicating income poverty or food poverty (measured in terms of direct calorie intake or cost of basic needs). Poverty, however, should be viewed in a broader sense as a complex interrelated domain of the following: income poverty, poverty due to hunger, poverty due to low wage, poverty due to constrained bargaining power, poverty due to unemployment, poverty due to lack of shelter, poverty due to lack of access to public resources including rights to khas land and khas waterbodies, poverty due to lack of education, poverty due to ill health, poverty mediated through environmental hazards, political poverty (due to lack of political freedom), poverty due to lack of transparency guarantee, poverty due to lack of protective security, poverty mediated through various forms of marginalization (e.g., among religious minorities, indigenous peoples, elderly people, disable people, poor women, slum dwellers, char people, rickshaw-van pullers etc.), poverty due to lack of knowledge about rights, poverty due to non-conducive environment in asserting rights, poverty due to lack of access to participate in public discussion and scrutiny, and poverty of mind set (for details see Barkat 2006a). This set of interrelated domains of poverty imply that poverty eradication is not just an economic issue, it is economic and much beyond.

The issue of poverty needs to be viewed in relation to deprivation: Poor people are caught into the deprivation trap (depicted in Figure 2), and true human development requires breaking that trap by empowering the excluded poor and deprived. Focusing on human freedom contrasts with narrower views of development, such as identifying development with the growth of gross national product, or with the rise in personal incomes, or with industrialization, or with technological advancement, or with modernization. Growth of GNP or of individual incomes can be important as means to expanding the freedoms enjoyed by the members of the society. But freedoms depend also on other determinants, such as social and economic arrangements as well as political and civil rights. The examples are facilities for education and health care, the liberty to participate in public discussion and scrutiny. Similarly, industrialization or technological progress or social modernization can substantially contribute to expanding human freedom, but freedom depends on other influences as well. If freedom is what development advances, then there is a major argument for concentrating on that overarching objective, rather than on some particular means, or some specially chosen list of instruments. Viewing development in terms of expanding substantive freedoms directs attention to the ends that make development important, rather than merely to some of the means that, inter alia, play a prominent part in the process (Sen 1999).

Figure 2: Deprivation trap

Source: Barkat 2003b
As stated earlier, human development is about people, about expanding their choices to lead lives they value. Economic growth, increased international trade and investment, technological advance— all are very important. But they are means, not ends. Whether they contribute to human development will depend on whether they expand people’s choices, whether they help create an environment for people to develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives. Therefore, the fundamental to enlarging human choices is building human capabilities: the range of things that people can do or be. The most basic capabilities for human development are leading a long and healthy life, being educated and knowledgeable about their rights and about the means and ways to establish those rights, having access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living and being able to participate in the life of one’s community. Assuring people’s dignity also requires that they be free— and able— to participate in the formation and stewardship of the rules and institutions that govern them. A poor person who cannot afford to send his/her children to school, but must send them to work in the fields or engage in household work, is lacking in human development.

Thus, true human development is freedom—mediated, which requires the removal of major sources of un-freedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or over activity of repressive states. Despite unprecedented increases in overall opulence, the contemporary world denies elementary rights to freedom to vast number—perhaps even the majority of people. Sometimes the lack of substantive freedoms relates directly to economic poverty, which robs people of the freedom to satisfy hunger, or to achieve sufficient nutrition, or to obtain remedies for treatable illness, or the opportunity to be adequately clothed or sheltered, or to enjoy clean water or sanitary facilities. In other cases, the un-freedom links closely to the lack of public facilities and social care, such as the absence of epidemiological programs, or of organized arrangements for health care or educational facilities, or of effective institutions for the maintenance of local peace and order.

Actually, what people can positively achieve is influenced by many factors including economic opportunities, political liberties, social powers, and the enabling conditions of good health, basic education, and the encouragement and nourishment of initiatives. The institutional arrangements for these opportunities are also influenced by the exercise of people’s freedoms, through the liberty to participate in social choice and in the making of public decisions that accelerate the progress of these opportunities. Realization of these interconnections is important to put ‘people’—the excluded distressed and deprived—in the centre of development.

Basically, there are five distinct types of freedom. These include political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees, and protective security. Each of these distinct types of rights and opportunities helps to advance the general capability of a person. They may also serve to complement each other and produce synergy. All these five types of freedom are linked with one another, and in-integrity produces synergy. Political freedoms— in the form of free speech and elections— help to promote economic security. Social opportunities— in the form of education and health facilities—facilitate economic participation. Economic facilities— in the form of opportunities for participation in trade and production, and access to public resources (e.g., khas land)— can help to generate personal abundance as well as public resources for social facilities. Ensuring free play of all these five types of freedom, in a most visible way, must be viewed as a natural precondition for empowerment.
From the justiciable rights-based empowerment perspective, the challenge of true human development includes both the elimination of persistence and endemic deprivation and the prevention of severe destitution, which emanate from lack of substantive freedom. Here, as stated above, freedom implies all five broad types of instrumental freedoms. Political freedoms refer to the opportunities for the people to determine governing bodies and principles of governance, to criticize authorities, to have the right to penalize for undemocratic governance, to have freedom of expression and an uncensored press. The intensity of economic needs adds to - rather than subtracts from - the urgency of political freedom (Sen 1999). The second forms of freedom-economic facilities refer to the opportunities that individuals enjoy to utilize economic resources for the purpose of production, or exchange, or consumption. The economic entitlements that a person has will depend on the ownership of and access to resources (land and other assets) as well as on the conditions of exchange. The third forms of freedom-social opportunities are the arrangements that society makes for education, health and so on, which accelerate the capability of individual's substantive freedom to live better. Political and economic oppressions substantially reduce the positive effect of social opportunities on individuals or on certain groups of people who are oppressed. The fourth form of freedom-transparency guarantees are related to the openness, i.e., the freedom to deal with one another under guarantees of disclosure and lucidity. Transparency guarantees are based on trust, violation of which adversely affects people's lives. Unfounded enactments, rules and regulations, contradictory official memos, keeping people uninformed about their rights, among others, are some of the good examples of lack of transparency guarantees which pave the way for oppressing people, promoting corruption, underhand dealings, mis-governance, and perpetuation of endemic deprivation. The fifth form of freedom-protective securities are extremely important because there are people who are vulnerable, fragile and deprived as a result of material changes that adversely affect their lives. The need for protective security can emerge as a consequence of economic structure itself and/or as a consequence of alienation from political and other freedoms. Ensuring protective securities implies the need for strong institutional arrangements. All these freedoms reflect distinct types of rights and opportunities which help to advance the general capability of a person, or a community characterized by some common identity-class, gender, culture, ethnicity, geographic location etc. Denial of these freedoms produces and reproduces serious imbalances in terms of social, economic, cultural, demographic, political and psychological life in our society. And making these freedoms work for the poor and marginalized necessitates understanding development as a process mediated through conscientization.

Box 2: Human development - the concept is larger than the index

Ironically, the human development approach to development has fallen victim to the success of its human development index (HDI). The HDI has reinforced the narrow, oversimplified interpretation of the human development concept as being only about expanding education, health and decent living standards. This has obscured the broader, more complex concept of human development as the expansion of capabilities that widen people's choices to lead lives that they value. Despite careful efforts to explain that the concept is broader than the measure, human development continues to be identified with the HDI—while political freedoms, participating in the life of one's community and physical security are often overlooked. But such capabilities are as universal and fundamental as being able to read or to enjoy good health. They are not included in the HDI because they are difficult to measure appropriately, not because they are any less important to human development.

Source: Fukuda-Parr 2002
UNDERSTANDING CONSCIENTIZATION: AS ROUTES TO DEVELOPMENT

Development is right- both Constitutional and justiciable. It is about both knowledge about these human rights as well as about means and ways to apply these rights or realization of these rights by the poor and marginalized people for whom, under class society, consistent denial of these rights is a rule. The central argument we want to forward in this study is that people’s conscientization is the key to sustained development of the poor and marginalized. This argument implies that true conscientization process has the all-encompassing potential to set an empowerment process in motion through which it is possible to transform human deprivation into human development; through which poor and marginalized people’s agency role in development realizes; and through which they can become pro-active demander of rights rather than passive recipients of right-based services. To set this process of conscientization in active motion, imparting and sharing knowledge about rights (human rights, knowledge about fundamentalism, worldview etc) is a necessary precondition, and struggle towards attainment of rights is a sufficient pre-condition. This necessary pre-condition forms the basis for internalization and the sufficient pre-condition forms the basis for informed action (praxis). It is argued that implementation of these two pre-conditions is necessary to realize the conscientization-mediated development which enlarges opportunities for a full life to people, expands real freedoms that people enjoy, expands choices to lead lives people value, and establishes dignified human life. In other words, this conscientization-mediated development should be seen as a route to crystallize the process of development with dignity.

In our understanding of development as conscientization it is worth, at this point, to explain two issues: (a) meaning of conscientization, and (b) broad aspects of conscientization.

The English term “conscientization” is a translation of the Portuguese term “conscientização”, which is also translated as “consciousness raising”. This term was first coined successfully by Brazilian educator, activist, and theorist Paulo Freire (1921-1997) in his 1970 seminal work, Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Freire was teaching the poor and illiterate members of Brazilian society to read at a time when literacy was a requirement for suffrage and dictators ruled many South American Countries.

Conscientization refers to a type of learning which is focused on perceiving and exposing social, political and economic contradictions and injustices. Conscientization also includes taking actions against oppressive elements in one’s life as part of that learning. This meaning of conscientization can be traced back to Italian left intellectuals of early 20th century, in their “philosophy of praxis” i.e, informed action. These intellectuals include Antonio Labriola, Rodolfo Mondolfo, Giovanni Gentile, Benedetto Croce, and (of course) Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937).
According to Gramsci, capitalism (capitalist state rule through force plus consent) maintains control not just through violence and political and economic coercion, but also ideologically, through a hegemonic culture in which the values of the bourgeoisie became the “common sense” values of all. Thus a consensus culture develops in which the working class indentifies their own good with the good of the bourgeoisies. Therefore, Gramsci suggests that the working class needs to develop a culture of its own. In Gramsci’s view, any class that wishes to dominate in modern conditions has to move beyond its narrow “economic-corporate” interests, to exert intellectual and moral leadership, and to make alliances and compromises with a variety of forces. Gramsci terms this union of social forces as “historic bloc”. This bloc forms the basis of consent to a certain social order, which produces and reproduces the hegemony of the dominant class through a nexus of institutions, social relations and ideas. Gramsci stated that all men are intellectuals, in that all have intellectual and rational faculties, but not all men have the social function of intellectuals. However, he distinguished between a ‘traditional’ intelligentsia which sees itself (wrongly) as a class apart from society, and the thinking groups which every class produces from its own ranks ‘organically’. Such ‘organic’ intellectuals do not simply describe social life in accordance with scientific rules, but rather articulate, through the language of culture, the feelings and experiences which the masses could not express for themselves. Therefore, according to Gramsci, it is needed to create a working-class culture through education, which will develop working-class intellectuals. This intellectual will (according to Gramsci) renovate and be critical of the status quo. Gramsci’s ideas about an education system for this purpose correspond with the notion of critical pedagogy and popular education as theorized and practiced in later decades by Paulo Freire in Brazil.

Conscientization proceed through the identification of ‘generative themes’, which Paulo Freire identifies as “Iconic representations that have a powerful emotional impact in the daily lives to learners”. In this way, individual consciousness helps breaking the “culture of silence” in which the socially dispossessed (deprived, destitute, distressed) people internalize the negative images of themselves created and propagated by the oppressor in situations of extreme poverty and marginalization. Liberating learners from this mimicry of the powerful, and the fratricidal violence that results therefore is a major goal of conscientization.

Paulo Freire, based on the premise- ‘people are not machines or objects that can be worked on like motor cars. They have to be worked with’- asserted that education can conquer oppression and is a means for liberation and social change. The most useful concepts Freire emphasized in his “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” are as follows:

i) **Dialogue:** Instead of teacher depositing (“against bank approaches”) information to the student, discussion based around the principle of respect would take place, wherein the teacher would often become the student and the students teachers.

ii) **Praxis:** Dialogue would lead to informed action and making a difference in ones world. Students are given the tools that lead to informed action – learning about letter writing, learning how to get involved in the community etc.

iii) **Culture of silence:** Dominated individuals lose the means by which to critically respond to the culture that is forced on them by a dominant culture. This is what happens if conscientization is not happening.
iv) **Language:** Through the gathering of a list of terms used in daily life in the community, the teacher can learn to understand the reality of the people and speak in a language that all understand. Making words relevant to the lives of the people helps to build a conscientization among students.

v) **Community and cultural circle:** All members of the classroom, regardless of class need to work together in order to achieve goals. The formation of a community in the classroom is called a “cultural circle”.

vi) **Cultural synthesis:** The recognition and respect afforded to different cultures. An extension of the mutual respect among learners in a discussion based classroom.

Finally, conscientization is a process by which the learner advances towards critical consciousness which is necessary for informed actions (social praxis) – the key goal of development education (according to Freire). This concept of conscientization is the foundation of community cultural development. Conscientization should not be equated with just consciousness raising because the latter may involve transmission of pre-selected knowledge (in congruence with “dominant culture”, “cultural hegemony”, “status quo” etc). Conscientization is the heart of liberatory education. Conscientization means breaking through prevailing mythologies to reach new levels of awareness – in particular, awareness of oppression, being an “object” of others’ will rather than a self-determining “subject”. This process of conscientization involves identifying contradictions in experience through dialogue and becoming part of the process of changing the world. It is based on the above analysis, we argue that conscientization-mediated development will be liberatory-development, and, thereby, will form the basis for real human(e) development. And, thus, is our urge to understand the essence of conscientization through how the most poor, vulnerable, marginalized people internalizes their rights (knowledge front) and how they build informed actions (practice front), and how far they move (as compared to the others who are not involved) in such process of conscientization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 4: Conscientization: As Routes to Development</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ A process of liberatory education and social change.</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ A process of breaking culture of silence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ A process to critically respond to dominant culture.</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Poor and marginalized people’s agency role.</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ This necessary pre-condition forms the basis for internalization, and the sufficient pre-condition forms the basis for informed action (praxis).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Struggle towards attainment of rights is a sufficient pre-condition.</td>
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**To Recapitulate**

Defining “development” is no easy task. Development is *right*. Increase in *per capita* income without distributive justice and within rising inequality is not development. True development is a process of inclusion of the excluded, but not an adverse inclusion. Development is about people, about expanding their choices to lead lives they value, about enlarging opportunities for full life which can only be guaranteed by empowering the poor, distressed, deprived, destitute and marginalized people in all fronts. True development is freedom-mediated process of human development. These include political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees, and protective security. Ensuring free play of all these five types of freedom, in a most visible way, must be viewed as a natural precondition for empowerment. In understanding the relationships between development and poverty it would be appropriate to mention that the economistic idea about *poverty* is mostly narrowly defined one indicating income poverty or food poverty (measured in terms of direct calorie intake or cost of basic needs). Poverty, however, should be viewed in a broader sense as a complex interrelated domain of the following: income poverty, poverty due to hunger, poverty due to low wage, poverty due to constrained bargaining power, poverty due to unemployment, poverty due to lack of shelter, poverty due to lack of access to public resources including rights to *khas* land and *khas* waterbodies, poverty due to lack of education, poverty due to ill health, poverty mediated through environmental hazards, political poverty (due to lack of political freedom), poverty due to lack of transparency guarantee, poverty due to lack of protective security, poverty...
mediated through various forms of marginalization (e.g., among religious minorities, indigenous peoples, elderly people, disable people, poor women, slum dwellers, char people, rickshaw-van pullers etc.), poverty due to lack of knowledge about rights, poverty due to non-conducive environment in asserting rights, poverty due to lack of access to participate in public discussion and scrutiny, and poverty of mind set.

Development is right – both constitutional and justiciable. It is about both knowledge about these human rights as well as about means and ways to apply these rights or realization of these rights by the poor and marginalized people for whom, under class society, consistent denial of these rights is rule. The central argument we want to forward in this study is that people’s conscientization is the key to sustained development of the poor and marginalized. This argument implies that true conscientization process has the all-encompassing potential to set an empowerment process in motion through which it is possible to transform human deprivation into human development; through which poor and marginalized people’s agency role in development realizes; and through which they can become pro-active demander of rights rather than passive recipients of right-based services. To set this process of conscientization in active motion, imparting and sharing knowledge about rights (human rights, knowledge about fundamentalism, worldview etc) is a necessary precondition, and struggle towards attainment of rights is a sufficient pre-condition. This necessary pre-condition forms the basis for internalization and the sufficient pre-condition forms the basis for informed action (praxis). It is argued that implementation of these two pre-conditions is necessary to realize the conscientization-mediated development which enlarges opportunities for a full life to people, expands real freedoms that people enjoy, expands choices to lead lives people value, and establishes dignified human life. In other words, this conscientization-mediated development should be seen as a route to crystallize the process of development with dignity.

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CHAPTER II

NIJERA KORI AS LABORATORY TO UNDERSTAND PROCESS OF CONSCIENTIZATION

ORGANIZED EFFORT OF PURSUING CONSCIENTIZATION: THE NIJERA KORI

Nijera Kori: The Beginning

Nijera Kori (NK) is an NGO in Bangladesh. After the famine of 1974, many destitute rural women made their way to the cities in search of food and work. Some women took the initiative of training some of these women in food processing so they were able to generate income. The process gradually resulted in the development of an organization “Nijera Kori”, which, in English, means, “We do it ourselves”. At its inception, therefore, famine-affected urban destitute women constituted the target group of Nijera Kori and the aim of the organization was to rehabilitate these women.

During the early period of the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), the mainstream NGOs in Bangladesh concentrated on rural social mobilisation to challenge the power structure, which brought a strong backlash from the rural elites particularly during the martial law. This was one of the reasons why there was a general move by the NGOs away from this and towards concentration on micro-credit. This concentration allowed professionalization of NGOs and increased the tendency of measuring progress in terms of money and quantity. However, a number of people working in leading NGOs, who felt that consciousness raising of the poor held the key to resolving the core problems of rural society joined in. NK with its current form and focus was formed in 1980 from a group of such people who had started working at field level and concentrating on rural social mobilization and felt that the increasingly service-based approach of NGOs would simply create dependency among the target population.

1 In developing this section, following documents were consulted:
- Annual Progress Report 2006-07, 2005-06, Nijera Kori
- Mid-term Review, Nijera Kori: Social Mobilisation, Voice and Democracy Program, July 2004
- Naila Kabeer, ‘We don’t do credit’ Nijera Kori, social mobilization and the collective capabilities of the poor in rural Bangladesh, Nijera Kori, 2002
- Official web-site of Nijera Kori [http://www.nijera kori.org]
- Annual Review of Nijera Kori: Social Mobilisation, Voice and Democracy Program, August 13, 2003, HDRC
This group brought about a change in the focus of the organization. It began to concentrate on addressing the situation which causes poverty and destitution of rural people rather than temporarily ameliorating, and that too at a superficial level, the suffering of those who faced such circumstances. The organizational objectives of Nijera Kori shifted to the struggle to create a society free from oppression and deprivation through the establishment of the fundamental rights of the people. In order to achieve this goal, the strategy that NK developed was to make people conscious of their rights and to assist them to develop the collective strength necessary to establish those rights. Under this goal, the target group of NK also expanded from its original concentration. Now NK defines its target group broadly as those women and men who earn their living mainly through physical labour. Its geographical concentration has an emphasis on rural rather than urban areas.

Mission, Objectives, and Target Group of Nijera Kori

Mission of Nijera Kori

- Development activities of Nijera Kori are directed for the establishment of rights of the downtrodden people.
- Women are an important and integral part of all production processes. In order to break the patriarchal system, Nijera Kori works to change the biased male perception towards women and encourages women to recognize and assert their own position in society.
- Nijera Kori feels that an accountable, democratic environment is absolutely essential for development. Nijera Kori imbibes democratic conduct through participation and accountability in planning, implementation, evaluation and overall management not only with the groups organised but throughout the organization itself.
- Nijera Kori believes in an environment friendly sustainable development process.

Objectives of Nijera Kori:

- To unite people, both women and men who have long been the victims of exploitation, social marginalization, oppression and poverty.
- To enable people thus united to understand and develop awareness about their rights, causes of their problems and their responsibilities.
- To empower people to take up challenges within their own spheres to create better and more meaningful lives for themselves and their immediate community.

Target group of Nijera Kori:

- Those dependant on physical labour as their main source of livelihood: wage labourers, sharecroppers, small and marginal farmers etc.
- Other vulnerable communities: indigenous communities, fisher folk, weavers, blacksmiths, barbers, cobblers, potters, small traders etc.

Box 5: NK: Facts and Figures about Organization

As on August 2007, the organization now has 260,034 group members, of whom 124,411 (48%) are male and 135,623 (52%) are female. It has a staff of 342 out of which 103 are female and 239 are male including 100 support staff consisting of both women and men and its program today is called 'Social Mobilisation, Voice and Democracy Program', which is operational in 1,353 villages, 172 unions, 37 upazilas, 17 districts.
Nijera Kori (NK) works with the poorest women and men in Bangladesh. These are people who rarely have any voice in local or national structure of decision making; and who are kept in their places by powerful (and increasingly violent) social structure. And its program today (2001-2007) is called “Social Mobilization, Voice and Democracy Program (SMVDP)“.

According to program outline, the expected outcomes are the following:

1. Sustained and expanded social mobilization of poor men and women in NK areas at village, union, thana, and regional levels.
2. Poor women and men in Nijera Kori areas are more aware of their civil, political, economic and social rights, including gender equality.
3. Collective actions planned and taken by poor women and men in specific areas to:
   - protest abuses and protect rights at community and local levels (eg. actions on violence against women, better operation of village shalish courts, police accountability).
   - increase their security and access to resources and entitlements (eg. access to khas land and water; reduced land capture by elites, for shrimp farming and other uses; more wage and sharecropping bargaining power); and
   - improve the accountability and operation of government services (eg. health, education, food security, and employment schemes).
4. Poor people gain more influence in local level administrative and political arenas and related decision-making processes.
5. Improved organizational capacity of Nijera Kori and its members for learning, advocacy and coalition building at national and international levels.

The organization uses social mobilization as a strategy to empower people in political and social terms. By building the collective capacities of the poor to mobilize in defense of their rights, NK seeks to engender a more self-reliant process of economic empowerment, with improved access to a range of tangible and less tangible resources. NK works to build capacity on a number of fronts, from building awareness of constitutional rights and mechanism, and seeking to improve accountability within government institutions, to local level dispute resolution and improving access to justice, safety and security.
NIJERA KORI’S CONSCIENTIZATION EFFORTS

NK’s core activities include formation of landless organization, training and orientation, and cultural activities, amongst many.

(a) Landless organization and formation

The landless groups are formed on a preliminary basis with a minimum of 16 to maximum 30 members. For reasons pragmatic and practical, groups are separately formed with male and female members. Rooted in the patriarchal values and the consequent social and religious beliefs, women in traditional Bangladeshi society are kept separate from men. For this reason at the preliminary stage, women groups are formed exclusively. But when at a later stage after necessary capacity building, the group’s member’s start working on various at par with their male colleagues, groups are formed with both male and female members. At a further level when two third of the targeted population at the village, union and upazilla level become group members, committees are formed. But the landless members, sometimes, form their own committee at regional level when situation demands and when such steps are felt necessary for the movement of the landless peoples even if this means less than two third of the targeted population are still not group members. At every level, the committees are formed and their terms renewed through annual group meetings. This is through such trial and above all of learning environment that the landless groups develop their organizational capacity, become aware of their rights and as well as responsibilities and gradually gain the capacity to claim their rights as citizen of the country.

The formation and renewal of the landless' committees at every level is done through annual conventions. In this process the landless organization gradually get strengthened and achieves a reputable identity, which ultimately ensures its share to the local power structure.

(b) Training

Group trainings are organized with 20-25 members and are divided in four categories: basic, advanced, higher selection and higher. At basic level, male and female members are provided trainings separately. Fro advanced level, trainings are organized with both male and female members, but at higher advanced level male and female members are separated. At higher level, they both are again grouped together.

NK follows this particular approach to impart relevant skills to both the male and female members. The objective is to create an environment where both male and female members get an open environment of sharing and mutual learning. This is particularly important for the female members who
need such an environment and who, otherwise, feel shy to express their feelings in
presence of male members. At later
stage, they are mixed together so that they
can build mutual trust and understanding, key
elements for their successful empowerment.
Along side, the main trainings, separate
trainings at basic and advanced level are
organized for members who are involved in
cultural activities, each session having 20
members. Furthermore, based on specific
needs of certain working areas, other
trainings on relevant subjects are also
provided. Some of such training courses are; ‘leadership development’, ‘collective production
and management’, ‘rights to information’, ‘globalization and sustainable development’
‘rights and constitutional security’, etc. Members who have already received basic level
training are eligible for these trainings.

(c) Cultural activities

Nijera Kori considers cultural activities an integral part of social mobilization. The objectives
of all cultural activities of NK are to attack on the injustice, exploitation and repressions of
the society on order to allow the poor and the disadvantaged people self-dependent, aware of
their human dignity. With this aims, cultural groups are formed with 13-20 members, with
the members who are interested to cultural activities. The members, at initial stage, sits 2-3
hours every day together among themselves, and play a very important role in the
mobilization of public opinion by performing issue-based drama, music and other cultural
performances. The cultural groups of the landless peoples, in the activity year, performed in
various issue based events, besides in the important national and international days. They
have written and performed 54 new pieces of drama, portraying the struggle for rights of the
poor and the landless peoples. Furthermore, they have performed 412 popular dramas in
various events, depicting themes like, violence against women, rights to khas land,
commercial shrimp cultivation, corruption in government, globalization, etc.

Activities of Nijera Kori are shown in below. In Figure 6, various activities of various
committees are depicted.

Category wise broad activities of Nijera Kori

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Broad activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Groups</td>
<td>• Formation of landless groups (bhumiheen samity).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Groups meetings, representatives’ meetings and collective meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Group workshops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Group formation at different levels, meetings and annual group meetings.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Group savings, bank accounts and collective economic activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>• Group training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Staff development training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Activities</td>
<td>• Long march.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Drama festival.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Box 7: Nijera Kori’s Conscientization Efforts

- NK uses social mobilization strategy to empower poor through 260,034 group members in 1,353 villages (172 unions, 37 upazilas, 17 districts).
- Target people: Poor and vulnerable communities.
- NK program contains - dialogues, praxis, community and cultural circle, cultural synthesis in the format of classical conscientization process.
- Broad activities: Formation of primary landless groups (16-30 members), human development training and orientation, cultural activities.
- NK members have become pro-active demander of rights rather than passive recipients of rights-based services.
- Philosophy and programmatic interventions of NK fall in the realm of conscientization.
**Livelihood**
- Legal aid activities.
- Education.
- Livestock vaccination.
- Establishment of watch committees (to observe on education, health, safe drinking water, agriculture and land and land development).

**Organizational**
- Networking and action for advocacy.
- Publications.
- Research.
- Planning, monitoring and evaluation.
- Participation of various technical experts in the review and evaluation of activities.
- Solidarity activities.
- Infrastructure and construction.

**Detail activities of Nijera Kori**
- Strengthening economic base of Bhumiheen Samity members through greater accumulation of collective capital and increased revenue from collective investments.
- Increase the landless in collective bargaining for living wages.
- Increase in the amount of land recovered for landless and marginal farmers.
- Increase bhumiheen samity members in conflict mediation.
- Increase number of children of bhumiheen samity members attends schools.
- Increase organized landless against religious fundamentalism, corruption, violation of rights (including that of women and indigenous people) and injustice.
- Increase access of Nijera Kori female members to organisational leadership.
- Increase access to justice for women survivors of violence.
- Increase access of women to savings, khas land and economic resources (cattle, poultry etc.).
- Challenging the stereotype image of women at community space by increased participation of women in shalish, bazaar committees, school committees etc. local bodies.
- Increase men’s participation on women issues.
- Increasing number of times the bhumiheen samity members approached by other social actors.
- Increase actions against irregularities and corruption in government schemes at local level.
- Increase allotment and possession of landless on khas land and water bodies.
- Increase eviction of land grabbers.
- Increase access of genuinely vulnerable and deprived women and men in various social and economic safety net measures of the local government (e.g. VGD, VGF, Elders Allowance, Widow Allowance, Female student-stipends etc.).
- Ensuring majority of the court verdicts in favour of organised landless regarding land and other human rights related cases.
- Increase number of meeting between representatives of Bhumiheen Samity and local government to discuss issues and concerns of the poor.
- Developing public opinion on land reform issues at local and national level.
- Establishing networks at national and international level against industrial shrimp aqua-culture.
- Strengthening a policy forum on access to water resource and its sustainable use.
- Increase knowledge base for pro-poor policy review and reform.
- Increase number of issue based media interactions held at local and national levels.

**ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT OF NIJERA KORI**

**Management of Nijera Kori**

The core value of Nijera Kori’s management structure and decision-making system is guided by the philosophy of ‘participatory democracy’. The overall governance of the organization rests with the ‘General Body,’ which elects the ‘Governing Body’ for two years. The ‘Governing Body’ meets regularly every three months while the ‘General Body’ holds its General Meeting annually. The ‘Governing Body’ appoints the Coordinator who is responsible for coordinating the overall programmes and management of Nijera Kori.
However, the main decision-making body of the organization is the Central Staff Convention, which is held every alternate year and attended by all staff of NK. Here they constitute a three-tier council for two years for overall management and coordination by electing their representatives (except coordinator) from among the staff. These councils are 1) Anchal Parishad (Area Council), 2) Bihagiya Parishad (Divisional Council) and 3) Nirbahi Parishad (Central Executive Council). The overall activities of NK are planned and monitored through weekly sub-centre meeting, monthly anchal parishad meeting, bi-monthly divisional parishad meeting, quarterly nirbahi parishad meeting, annual divisional staff convention and finally at central staff convention/council. On behalf of the above councils the Coordinator regularly consults the Governing Body.

For linking the grassroots, on the other hand, each Anchal (area structure) has 3-4 sub-centres, which are made up of female and male field staff. They, through living collectively in a centre in the field, manage the activities of NK along with the landless people. The landless groups themselves have their own structure for group activities (See Figure 5 and 6).

Nijera Kori ensures that all staff and target group members have equal participation and say in the planning, monitoring and implementation of its activities. According to group structure, the groups, through annual group meetings, village, union, thana and anchal group/committee meetings, annual group conventions and groups' representative meetings, evaluate their previous activities, discuss problems and remedial measures and formulate their next plans of action. NK staffs, by participating in those meetings, become part of the decisions/outputs taken in these meetings, which they later share in NK's internal meetings/forums as per organizational structure. This process of synthesizing opinions from group level to central staff convention/council and its subsequent reflection in the formulation of a concrete plan shapes the participatory management system of Nijera Kori.
ORGANOGRAM OF NIJERA KORI

GENERAL BODY

GOVERNING BODY

CO-ORDINATOR

SECRETARY

STAFF GENERAL BODY (CONVENTION)

NOTE

- BOX WITHIN SIGNIFIES ELECTED POST
- BOX WITHIN SIGNIFIES APPOINTED POST
- STAFF GENERAL CONVENTION
- CENTRAL TEAM
- DIVISIONAL TEAM
- DIVISIONS - 04
  - DHAKA DIVISION, ANCHAL-03, SUB-CENTRE - 06
  - RAJSHAHI DIVISION, ANCHAL-06, SUB-CENTRE - 15
  - CHITTAGONG DIVISION, ANCHAL-04, SUB-CENTRE -16
  - KHULNA DIVISION, ANCHAL-03, SUB-CENTRE -14

Figure 5: Organogram of Nijera Kori
Planning, monitoring, evaluation (PME) and reporting system of Nijera Kori

Nijera Kori has been practicing a comprehensive PME and reporting system ensuring equal participation of staff and landless groups in the whole process (see Figure 7). The landless groups through regular meetings evaluate their activities and formulate plans. In these meetings leaders, representatives of landless groups/committees from other working areas too actively participate, along with the field staff of NK. In fact, these meetings constitute the basis of the PME and management system. The information and recommendations generated from these meetings of the landless groups are discussed at various other levels (i.e. village, union, area and thana committee meetings and conventions etc.) of the organization. The opinions and proposals of the landless received through this process are then sent to the sub-centres of NK through NK field staff, which later are discussed and evaluated at various
levels of the organization as per the organizational structure. Through this process, guidelines for NK activities are set, based on which NK staffs formulate the plans for the organization. To help coordinate activities, facilitate interaction between staff and groups and share opinions and provide necessary suggestions; the executive council, divisional council and area presidents directly participate in field level activities on a regular basis. In addition, the staff and the groups at times visit each others’ working areas with a view to assess, evaluate, monitor and provide necessary counseling to their counterparts. The same process is followed where written reports are produced in each meeting based on which the annual report is made at the end of every activity year.
Figure 7: Planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting system of Nijera Kori

**GENERAL BODY**

**GOVERNING BODY**

**ANNUAL STAFF CONVENTION/COUNCIL**
(Present divisional and central report, discuss and finalise annual report and future plan).

**NIRBAHI PARISHAD (STAFF)**
(Organise quarterly meeting, present divisional and central quarterly report, discuss plan and progress, prepare quarterly report and annual report).

**ANCHAL PARISHAD (STAFF)**
(Organise monthly meeting, present individual staff and sub-centre report, discuss and prepare monthly progress report and plan).

**SUB-CENTRE (STAFF)**
(Organise weekly meeting, discuss weekly activities, prepare report and plan).

**THANA COMMITTEE (GROUP)**
(Organise monthly meeting, discuss activities and organise convention, present report and plan).

**Area Committee (Group)**
(Organise monthly meeting, discuss activities and organise convention, present report and plan).

**Union Committee (Group)**
(Organise monthly meeting, discuss activities and organise convention, present report and plan).

**VILLAGE COMMITTEE (GROUP)**
(Organise monthly meeting, discuss activities and organise convention, present report and plan).

**Landless Groups,**
(Organise regular weekly meeting, discuss activities and issues, organise annual general meeting and prepare plan).

**ANNUAL DIVISIONAL CONVENTION (STAFF)**
(Present anchal and divisional team report, discuss and finalise divisional annual report and plan).

**DIVISIONAL PARISHAD (STAFF)**
(Organise bi-monthly meeting, present anchal and divisional team report, discuss and prepare bi-monthly report, divisional annual report and plan).
Working areas of Nijera Kori

From the very inception, the NK activists started working in the areas where the poor constitute the majority of the population and who mainly depend on manual labour to earn a living. Most of these working areas fall in close vicinity of the seacoasts and river basins. Besides, Nijera Kori also works in some specific areas where most of the inhabitants belong to the vulnerable communities such as weavers, blacksmiths, tobacco and sugarcane farmers etc. and in the areas where fundamentalism, human rights abuse and violation against women is rampant.

Nijera Kori provides enough logistical support to carry out its programmes at field level, coordinate all its activities including regular trainings. Overall activities in the working areas are being managed and coordinated through 51 sub-centres, 16 areas, 4 divisional offices cum training centres located respectively in Tangail (Gala), Bogra (Noongola), Comilla (Chandina) and Khulna (Maniktala). The Head Office of NK is located in Dhaka.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 8: Working Areas of Nijera Kori</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As of August 2007, Nijera Kori has been operating in 1,353 villages in 172 unions, 37 upazilas, and 17 districts- covering 260,034 group members coming from 108,401 families with a total population of more than 585,000. The female: male ratio of memberships is 52:48.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Map 1: Working Area: Nijera Kori

- **NIJERA KORI WORKING AREA**

- **Map Legend**: NIJERA KORI WORKING AREA

- **Map Description**: This map illustrates the working area of Nijera Kori in Bangladesh. The map includes various districts and regions, with each area shaded to indicate the Nijera Kori working region. The map also includes a legend to differentiate the working area from other regions.
To Recapitulate

Nijera Kori (NK) is an NGO in Bangladesh, formed in 1980. The organizational objectives of Nijera Kori shifted to the struggle to create a society free from oppression and deprivation through the establishment of the fundamental rights of the people. In order to achieve this goal, the strategy that NK developed was to make people conscious of their rights and to assist them to develop the collective strength necessary to establish those rights. Under this goal, the target group of NK also expanded from its original concentration. Now NK defines its target group broadly as those women and men who earn their living mainly through physical labour. Its geographical concentration has an emphasis on rural rather than urban areas. Nijera Kori (NK) works with the poorest women and men in Bangladesh. These are people who rarely have any voice in local or national structure of decision making; and who are kept in their places by powerful (and increasingly violent) social structure.

Its program today (2001-2007) is called “Social Mobilization, Voice and Democracy Program (SMVDP)” . The supergoal of the program is to reduce poverty and inequality, and to promote human rights in Bangladesh. The goal of the program is to improve accountability and capability of democratic processes and to create more responsive, people-centered governance at local and higher levels. The immediate objective is to enable the Nijera Kori members and their allies to increase effective pressure on the government, political and other elites in order to have better access to decision-making processes, resources and services for poor men and women. The outputs of the project reads: (a) sustaining the social mobilization of poor people, (b) raising their awareness of human rights and legal entitlements, (c) supporting collective actions on a wide range of issues, (d) influencing administrative and political decision-making processes at local and regional levels, and (e) improving Nijera Kori’s institutional capacity and coalition building at national and other levels.

As on August 2007, NK now has 260,034 group members, of whom 124,411 (48%) are male and 135,623 (52%) are female. It has a staff of 342 out of which 103 are female and 239 are male including 100 support staff consisting of both women and men. The program is operational in 1,353 villages, 172 unions, 37 upazila, 17 districts.

The organization uses social mobilization as a strategy to empower people in political and social terms. By building the collective capacities of the poor to mobilize in defense of their rights, NK seeks to engender a more self-reliant process of economic empowerment, with improved access to a range of tangible and less tangible resources. NK works to build capacity on a number of fronts, from building awareness of constitutional rights and mechanism, and seeking to improve accountability within government institutions, to local level dispute resolution and improving access to justice, safety and security. NK’s core activities include formation of landless organization, training and orientation, and cultural activities, amongst many. NK program contains dialogues, praxis, community and cultural circle, cultural synthesis in the format of classical conscientization process.