

NIJERA KORI IN RETROSPECT

IN SEARCH OF AN ORGANISATION  
OF THE RURAL POOR

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NIJERA KORI

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## **FOREWARD**

For Nijera Kori the lesson gained out of its experiences at the field level, have been the most important factors for determining general guidelines and program strategies. Therefore, a continuous process of monitoring program and assessing its performance has always taken place as an integral part of its activities. Despite this continual process of assessment, a need was long recognised for incorporating a more systematic method of assessing our performance in the field in order to have a general understanding of what has been achieved so far. It was also felt important to review the effectiveness and adequacy of the means adopted at present by Nijera Kori for successful implementation of its program and also to identify problems and weaknesses that need to be over-come.

At a staff meeting of Nijera Kori in July, 1982 a decision to undertake an internal evolution of its performance to date was taken. Accordingly an interim evaluation was carried out during August-September, 1982.

Eight members from Nijera Kori field personnel were chosen to carry out the evaluation consisting of four women and four men. They were sent to assess areas separate from their own working areas, in four teams of two members each. The designing, coordinating, analysing, writing and finalising the findings as a whole report was undertaken by Mohiuddin Ahmad.

The finding of this evaluation could be of help and usefulness not only to us at Nijera Kori but also to all others engaged in similar field of activities. We hope this will help present an honest picture of the effectiveness of our programs to all our friends and sympathisers who have shown keen interest in our work. The real usefulness of this report will be achieved only when it enhances the quality of our programs in future.

We would like to acknowledge with gratitude the hard work and sincerity of the members of the evaluation team who took time off their own field programs to do the evaluation. The contribution of Mr. Mohiuddin Ahmad needs to be acknowledged particularly for all the time he has given towards the actual realisation of this evaluation.

Khushi Kabir  
Projects Coordinator

## **PREFACE**

The genesis of Nijera Kori's program may be narrated in small phrase: Consciousness through action. The target audience is the rural poor, the landless and destitute men and women. Given the socio-politico-economic milieu, the effort of Nijera Kori has been an intervening factor which is expected to be followed by certain positive transformation of the general awareness of the target population. It had been expected that the latter would become critically conscious, get organised and eventually act to transform their conditions of existence in their favor.

Now the question arises how far this process worked. It is very difficult to identify the indicators of success with respect to a program that envisages a process of conscientisation. Nor any period of time can be specified for the successful completion of such a program.

The role of Nijera Kori had been primarily limited to the preparation of certain subjective conditions, i.e. organisation, mobilisation, cohesiveness, regimentation, developing analytical skill, etc., which were expected to be followed by concrete action. But action, in reality, takes place and attains success when the objective condition is also conducive to it simultaneously.

The general objective condition is, however, affected by a host of intervening factors and components of which the effort of Nijera Kori is one. Hence it may be misleading if any success or failure is attributed exclusively to any single factor. Also it is very difficult, rather impossible, to quantify the relative incidence of a particular factor in this regard. This poses a fundamental problem with respect to the evaluation of a program that deals with the development of a people's organisation in the broader socio-politico-economic perspective.

Given this limitation, an attempt has been endeavoured to evaluate the program of Nijera Kori, the primary objective being the review of present state of things in order to identify weaknesses inherent and problems faced in the process of implementation. Nature and composition of landless and women groups nature and background of groups' leadership, groups' perceptions and opinions with respect to the program, management and administration of Nijera Kori, social implications of the organising process, etc. have been highlighted here as much as possible. This may not reveal the glimpses of a comprehensive evaluation, since many issues might have been either left out or discussed in brief. However, optimum conformity with fact has been attempted in the analysis.

Section I of the report briefly portrays background information, program, objective and implementation mechanism of Nijera Kori. The methodology of the evaluation exercise has been narrated in Section II. All sections of Part Two have dealt with relevant findings and analyses. Detailed statistical information have been provided in Appendix I and Appendix II. Besides, a glossary of terms and a summary of findings have been attached in the beginning.

Mohiuddin Ahmad.

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

- i. Nijera Kori has been organising village-based groups of men and women in different rural areas of Bangladesh for several years. 1196 male groups and 613 female groups have so far been formed with total membership of 38,088 and 11,554 respectively.
- ii. Nijera Kori primarily emphasises the organisation of the poorest sections of the population, particularly the landless. Among the organisation 20.02% of male groups and 31.25% of female groups are composed of landless members exclusively. Besides, more than half of total group membership are landless for 69.27% and 60.94% of male and female groups respectively.
- iii. The highest proportion of group leaders have been found to join their respective groups with an objective to have their own platform of action, percentages being 56.98 and 42.97 for male and female respectively.
- iv. Such organisational process has been found to provide a new experience to most of the groups. 67.60% and 91.41% of male and female group leaders have been found to have no such organisational background previously.
- v. Leadership within group have been found static. There has been little change in leadership with respect to time.
- vi. Few group leaders have been found to receive economic benefit from respective groups and the overwhelming majority have been working with some sort of voluntary zeal.
- vii. A sizable proportion of group leaders have not yet received any orientation training from Nijera Kori. The participation of females in the training program has been found relatively lower.
- viii. Expansion of groups through existing groups and group members has been done to a satisfactory extent.

- ix. Regular interaction with the organisers of Nijera Kori has been felt by most of the groups. Female groups feel it more frequently.
- x. Organisers have been found to be well accepted among the target people in most of the cases.
- xi. Groups mostly prefer local recruitment of organisers.
- xii. Organisation and mobilisation of the landless has been followed by conflicts and confrontations in many cases. This has its positive impact on the regimentation of groups.



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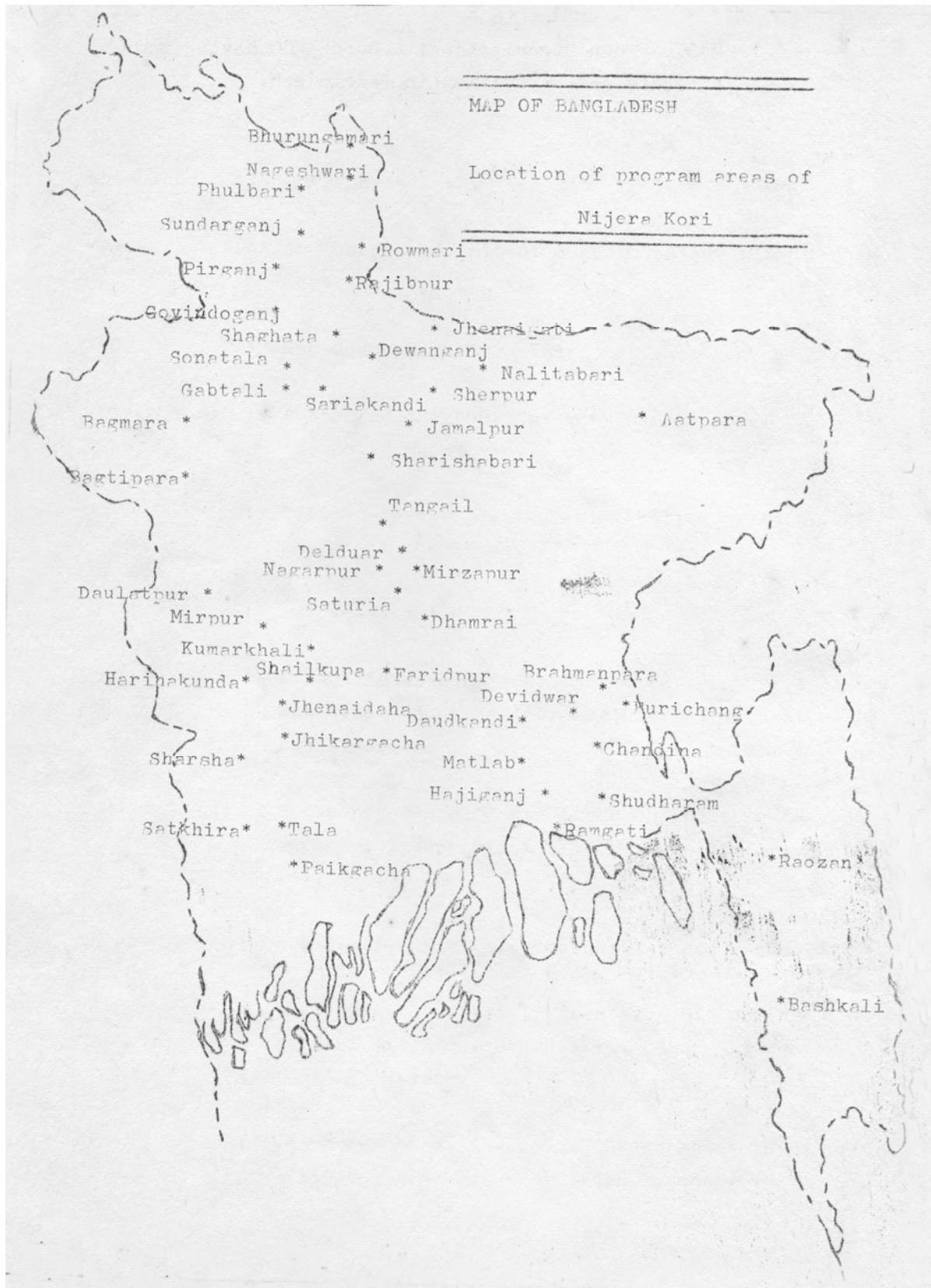
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## GLOSSARY

Azadi	:	A national vernacular daily published from the port city of Chittagong. The term stands for independence.
Banglar banee	:	A national vernacular daily published from Dhaka. It means 'the message of Bangladesh'.
Bangladesh Bhumiheen Samity	:	The name of the proposed landless organisation meaning 'Bangladesh Landless Organisation.
CARE	:	An American relief agency.
CO	:	Circle Officer, a thana level government official.
District	:	A geo-administrative unit. Presently there are twenty one districts in Bangladesh.
DC	:	Deputy Commissioner, The chief executive of a district.
Food For Work	:	An employment program where wages are paid in wheat.
Gherao	:	A particular type of trade union movement where the participants or demonstrators lay seige to a person or parsons ,voice their demand and continue the seige till their demands are fulfilled
Group	:	Grass-root group of the rural poor as defined in this text. Generally one group consists of 10 to 50 members.
IRDP	:	Integrated Rural Development Program. This is a public institution which sponsors cooperative program among the rural people.
Kash land	:	Government land.
Maund	:	An indigenous unit of measurement of weight, equavalent to 37.32 kilograms.

NGO	:	Non Government Organisation.
Nijera Kori	:	A Bangladeshi NGO. The very name means: 'We do it ourselves'.
OC	:	Officer-in charge, the chief police official in charge of the thana.
Proshika	:	A Bangladeshi NGO
SDO	:	Sub-divisional Officer, the chief executive of a Sub-Division, a smaller administrative unit within the district.
S.S.C	:	Secondary School Certificate which is awarded after successful completion of ten years of formal schooling.
Thana	:	A smaller administrative unit within a sub-division.
Union	:	The lowest level administrative unit composed of several villages. Generally, a Thana is composed of 10 to 25 unions.
UP	:	Union Parishad, the local government that executes all government programs at the union level.
UTO	:	United Town Organisation, a Dutch NGO having some projects and activities in Bangladesh.

# Map of Bangladesh



# PART ONE

## SECTION: I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **I.1 : BACKGROUND**

Bangladesh is considered as one of the least developed countries in the world where four-fifths of the population live below the poverty line. It is primarily an agro-based country where more than 90% of the total population live in rural areas with agriculture being the predominant livelihood. Data reveals that around 10% of the people own around 50% of the total cultivable land, the proportion of landless being 40% of the rural dwellers and every year the percentage of landless households has been increasing at an alarming rate. These people live a dehumanised life deprived of real benefit of development efforts, struggling hard and yet unable to meet their barest necessities.

However, the position of women, particularly of the poorest stratum is even more depressed. Social constraints are forced on women which gives them little or no mobility, leaving them unexposed to the world around them. Their employment opportunities are limited and those which are available are low paid. They suffer from insecurity both at home and outside. They live as isolated individuals, forced to submit to the rules of the society. Because of said premise they to face in addition to their under-exposure, it is difficult, rather impossible for them to be able to take control over their destiny on their own. Development organisations in Bangladesh, particularly the NGOs, have been concentrating their efforts with respect to social and human development addressing mostly toward the poorest section of the population. Despite their efforts, the fact remains that very few are really committed to the problem of the poor and destitute women.

## **I.2: EMERGENCE OF NIJERA KORI**

Amidst a situation where no significant program existed exclusively for the poor and destitute women, Nijera Kori came into existence. The history of Nijera Kori is eventful. Initially the program started in an embryonic form to rehabilitate the famine-stricken destitute women who had been immigrating in flocks to the city during the end of 1974. Elijabet Helsing, a Norwegian lady working with the WFP in Dhaka at that time, started the program on her own at her residence, providing sericulture training to the destitute women immigrants. Besides she provided accommodation and food to them as well as helped them to earn a little exploiting their skill by providing necessary inputs. The sericulture program started in the beginning of 1976 in full swing. Many women got employment in different organisations after receiving training from here. Till then, she had been financing the program from her own pocket. With expansion of activities and increasing cost, necessity for grants from different sources, particularly from abroad, had been felt and it had become imperative to have a formal organisation. Many social workers extended their warm cooperation and a governing body was formed in the beginning of 1977 comprising Bangladeshi citizens belonging to different spheres of social life with commitment to such type of social work. Elijabet became its patron. Nijera Kori got registration with the Department of Social Welfare in 1980.

## **I.3: FIELD INVOLVEMENT**

Nijera Kori got involved in field projects in August '79 when a group of women development workers joined it deserting from CUSO's women's program. Gradually Nijera Kori grew into an organisation addressing specific programs and activities toward the rural women belonging to the poorest stratum, particularly the landless, with an objective to develop an organisation of the most oppressed section of the society. In line with this objective, Nijera Kori initiated its field program exclusively with the women in three locations: Raozan, Ramgati and Kumarkhali in the districts of Chittagong, Noakhali and Kushtia respectively. Until mid-1980, Nijera Kori had been running its women's program where a large number of village-based women's groups were formed. The program was implemented exclusively by female organisers residing in respective field locations.

#### **I.4: SHIFT OF EMPHASIS**

Nijera Kori emphasises the organisation of women as a separate field of activity. To reach the women, it is necessary for the program to develop in them an awareness of the social nature of the oppression they face as a class and within the class, their oppression as a sex. Once an understanding is reached, the identification of the social system with both forms of oppression becomes possible. But the experience reveals that if such a program is to be implemented successfully, it needs to be correlated and integrated with development efforts and the mobilisation of the society in general. This led to rethinking of ideas.

Though the initial strategy of Nijera Kori had been to organise the women exclusively, it had been felt that it was no less important to include and conscientise the men belonging to the same stratum to work toward their ultimate liberation. The society and its inherent contradiction need to be judged from the social perspective and the problems of women are rested in the socio-politico-economic elements that exist in an exploitative social system. Having this realisation, Nijera Kori decided to add the organisation of men alongside that of women of the same socio-economic background. Though the organisation of men and women would develop separately, it would lead to a collective organisation of landless women and men in future when the situation would become conducive for such a merger. With this end in view, the analysis of the oppressive role of men with regard to women had become an integral part of the motivational program for men, with the eventual realisation that though they are oppressed as a class, they themselves are often guilty of oppressing others within their class, leading to disunity among themselves. Accordingly, program areas have been chosen where there have been local initiatives to organise the landless and other poorer sections of the population. The implementation of this program got momentum when a large group of organisers joined Nijera Kori in August `80 deserting BRAC. Their previous involvements in different rural areas were also merged with the mainstream of Nijera Kori's program.



## **I.5 PROGRAM SUMMARY**

Nijera Kori's program is committed to the organisation of the oppressed people, men and women, living in the rural areas of Bangladesh, particularly directed to the landless and marginal farmers living on the sale of wage labour and other occupational groups, i.e., fishermen, weavers, artisans, etc.. By living with the target audience, the organisers of Nijera Kori have been trying to develop the organisation of men and women at the grass-root level through analytical discussion and dialogue which is being systematised in an educative process which includes training, workshop, convention and cultural forum.

Expansion is being done systematically in adjacent areas rather than in a scattered manner. Expansion is emphasised through existing groups. Linkage between groups and areas is maintained through regional meetings and group conventions on the one hand and through joint social actions on common issues on the other.

With regard to economic program to be taken up by groups, priority is given to the mobilisation of own resources and proper exploitation of public resources. This is treated as a means for strengthening organisation and collective effort rather than an end in itself.

Training program in the form of a series of orientation sessions is the main thrust of Nijera Kori's activities for both male and female groups. The methodology is such that discussion forums are arranged comprising participants from male and female grass-root groups. Specific and redesigned training module is followed which provides participants opportunities for critical analysis of their environment and help them to build confidence in their own creativity and capability for action. What is most emphasised is a new way of looking at things, the ability to perceive, analyse and change one's environment.

Two types of training are being imparted at present. First, a basic orientation course of five days' duration is arranged for male and female participants separately. Secondly, advance course of three days' duration is arranged having participants from male and female groups together.

There is also cultural team comprising five members whose activities constitute an integral component of the training program. The team is involved in staging drama, puppet show and musical soiree for the target people. This team is mobile.

## **I.6: GOAL**

Attempts had been made from different quarters to organise the rural poor since long ago. There had been many sporadic as well as continuous peasant movements against tenancy conditions, social injustice and political oppression in different rural areas of Bangladesh which never sustained for long. On the contrary, peasantry got divided, confused and often misled by contrasting political opinions preached by different quarters. As a result, no indogeneous platform of action of the landless and poor peasantry could develop on a nation-wide scale.

Since the liberation of Bangladesh, a host of voluntary development organisations have been working in different rural areas of Bangladesh with an objective to organise the rural poor, the landless in particular. But the situation did not improve to the expected extent. There have been unhealthy competitions among some organisation. Many grass-root landless organisations are portrayed as organisations of the sponsoring agency and are compelled to implement the pre-designed program of the former.

Nijera Kori, for last few years, has been feeling a necessity of a nation-wide mass oraganisation of the landless, poor peasantry and other poor occupational sections of rural Bangladesh. Without trying to impose anything from above, it started working from the grass-root level and emphasised organisational expansion through existing groups. Already a number of convenions of grass-root groups have been held at regional level attended by hundreds of representatives from male and female groups. The process of expansion and linkage has got momentum and is speedily heading toward the formation of a macro-level organisation of the toiling mass.

## **I.7 EVALUATION**

There have been many achievements as well as problems confronted during this eventful period since the initiation of Nijera Kori. It may be mentioned here that Nijera Kori acts as a forum of a group of like-minded development workers which provides them an opportunity to learn so that they can equip themselves with necessary understanding, realisation and skill. There has been a continuous felt-need for the assessment of past activities to consolidate efforts and to reshape strategies and tactics to cope with future needs. With this aim in view, it has been planned to undertake an evaluation of Nijera Kori`s program. It is hoped that this evaluation will explore and identify issues and problems confronted by the development workers and will facilitate conclusive realisation leading to concrete action

## **SECTION II**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **II.1: FRAMEWORK**

Since the evaluation has been planned to assess performances and identify problems to consolidate achievements to be followed by correlate action in future, necessary overview of existing programs have been taken care of in this regard. Project proposals, activity reports, service statistics and opinion of organisers of Nijera Kori have been incorporated as necessary inputs for the evaluation. Besides, a survey of the leaders of grass-root organisations or groups has been undertaken to generate ideas how the target audience perceive and act in the process of their organisation.

The evaluation was undertaken by a group of field organisers of Nijera Kori. The entire field area had been divided into four geographical regions and accordingly four teams were assigned the responsibility, each for one region. Each team was comprised of two members, one female and one male. Members of evaluation teams chosen from a particular region were given the responsibility to operate in a different region in order to avoid any bias. They were primarily responsible for all observations assessments and the field survey.

## **I I.2: SURVEY DESIGN**

Group leaders of all groups, male and female covered by the program of Nijera Kori form the survey population. This has been grouped into two categories, old and new. An `old` group is one which has been functioning for less than three years .Whereas groups functioning for less than three years but not less than one month have been treated as `new` groups. All old groups have been conversed in the survey. Beside, 10% of new groups have been selected taking proportional representation of groups with a minimum of two from each cluster of groups in areas where there has not been any old group. In total, 307 group leaders, old and new, have been covered as ultimate survey units.

## **I I.3: ADMINISTRATION OF THE SURVEY**

A pre-designed questionnaire was used to obtain necessary information. In order to attain the objectives of the survey following sets of information were mainly sought in the questionnaire.

- (a) Composition of groups;
- (b) Background of leaders;
- (c) Leaders` opinion about Nijera Kori`s program and administration.

The survey was undertaken during the month of August, 1982.

## **I I. 4: ANALYSIS**

Information and opinion furnished by the respondents provided necessary data for the analysis. All information have been arranged to facilitate comparison between male and female groups/respondents. Besides, impressions and assessments of evaluators, activity reports and other documents of Nijera Kori were used as inputs for the analysis. Incorporating all these, a draft report was prepared and presented at a meeting of senior organisers held in November, 1982 where the report was intensively reviewed. After necessary editing, the report was finalised and memographed.

## APPENDIX : I

**Table I.1:** Distribution of existing groups and members by sex and region.

Region	No. of groups		No. of members		Total savings (Taka)
	male	female	male	female	
North	532	164	16,456	3,129	2,80,165
East	217	148	8,468	2,429	2,16,390
South-West	161	159	7,046	3,852	2,15,965
Central	286	142	6,118	2,144	2,59,093
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,196</b>	<b>613</b>	<b>38,088</b>	<b>11,554</b>	<b>9,71,613</b>

Source : Service statistics

**Table I.2:** Distribution of group leaders surveyed by age of group to which they belong.

Age of group	<u>Frequency</u>	
	Male	Female
Less than 1	26	18
1 to less than 2	23	17
2 to less than 3	29	27
3 to less than 4	72	47
4 to above	29	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>128</b>

## **PART TWO**

### **SECTION III**

#### **COMPOSITION OF GROUPS**

##### **III .1: MEMBERSHIP**

Nijera Kori`s program has been addressed to the poorest sections of the rural population, the major and initial efforts being directed toward the organisation to those who are land-less or live on wage labour. Thus the target population of Nijera Kori`s program comprises of landless agricultural workers, marginal farmers, tenant farmers, artisans, wage workers of other rural occupations, i.e., weaving, black smithy, pottery, etc.. Since the rural economy and power-structure is highly skewed in favour of land ownership, the landlessness has been primarily emphasised for membership of village-based groups, the grass-root level organisation sponsored by Nijera Kori.

The relative incidence of landless members has been found higher for female groups than male groups. Survey data reveals that 31.25% of female groups comprise of landless members exclusively (do not own any arable land, though may or may not own homestead).The percentage is 24.02 for male groups. The highest proportions of groups have been found to have landless members more than half of the total membership, percentages being 69.27 and 60.94 for male and female groups respectively. A few groups have been found to have landless members less than half of total members of respective groups. The proportion of such groups is slightly higher for male groups than female groups, percentages being 5.03 and 3.91 respectively. However, 1.12% of male groups have been found having no landless member. No such female group exists (see table I I.1).

Though Nijera Kori always emphasises membership of groups from amongst the poorest, the landless in particular, yet it is well aware of the fact that a sizable proportion of the rural population who are equally exploited and suppressed under the existing social system and property relation even though they own some amount of land. The question that concerns a catalyst organisation is whether to concentrate exclusively among the property less working population by alienating other sections possessing meager resource or to integrate all oppressed sections in a common platform so that it can exercise its hegemony by virtue of its numerical superiority. The answer, however, lies in the nature of contradiction among these different strata of the oppressed population. Empirical evidences reveal that the unity and cohesiveness among members of a group is sustained if the nature of such contradiction among remains non-antagonistic. On the other hand, non-antagonistic contradictions may become antagonistic unless handled carefully. The hypothesis that the group cohesiveness is a function of absolute homogeneity of economic condition may be misleading by its over simplified and generalised application undermining the objective of the organisation and the concept of class-correlation.

It would be interesting to see how the group members view the participation of the relatively better off persons in such type of grass- root organisations. Data reveals responses in favour of their membership to a sizable extent. Among groups exclusively composed to landless member, the highest proportion of the leaders responded positively to accept better-off sympathisers as members of their respective groups, percentages being 46.51 and 47.50 for male and female groups respectively. Among groups with more than half of the members being landless, the situation is slightly different where lower proportion of female group leaders responded in favour of the membership of the better off sympathisers than male group leaders, percentages being 33.33 and 54.03 respectively. Less than 5% of male groups leaders of both categories are not willing to maintain organisational relationship with better off sympathisers. Such percentage (around 20%) is much higher for women group leaders of both categories (see table II.2).

Responses in favour of or against such membership pose a fundamental question and needs to be resolved very carefully . This envisages a two-fold problem; first, how to expand the organisation of the rural poor without alienating sections that may play a vital role as ally in the common struggle against the exploitative social system and secondly, how to restrain the emergence of a privileged stratum that may develop from a group comprised off members lacking socio-economic homogeneity.

### **III.2: OBJECTIVE**

Nijera Kori has been working with different sections of the rural poor mainly with an objective to develop a mass organisation of their own and accordingly different strategies and tactics have been adopted to attain the objective. This does not necessarily ensure that the participants at the grass-root level also have the similar objective while involving themselves in the process of organisation. They may have their own strategy, typically conditioned by problems of survival.

However, the perceptions of group members do not seem to contradict the main objective of Nijera Kori. Data reveals that the highest proportion of respondents joined respective groups with an objective to develop an organisation of their own, percentages being 56.98 and 42.97 for male and female respectively. 22.91% of male group leaders have been found to join respective groups primarily for economic betterment, the percentage being 40.63 for female group leaders. Among male group leaders, 6.70 joined respective groups to get settlement in khas land, 4.47% to obtain credit and 7.82% to participate in the food for work program. Such percentages are 3.73, 4.69 and 3.91 respectively for female group leaders (see table II.3).

Though a sizable majority of group leaders have involved themselves in developing an organisation of their own, yet the sign of multiple objectives is evident from their responses. It seems that the participants of the grass-root organisation have their own short-run survival strategies which they like to undertake in a collective manner. Many of them nourish the spirit of a broad-based organisation as the ultimate goal, but also many fail to perceive things beyond a certain limit conditioned by basic human needs. People's perception is moulded largely by material conditions of existence. It seems to be utopian to induce the zeal of organisation among the starving people unless they are ensured of a square meal. It is equally utopian to talk about complete liberation from the clutches of exploitation if the people are stuck in more economism. Hence, this poses a problem for the organisers how to combine short-run objectives with long-run goal and how to mobilise the participants toward the ultimate end by paying due attention to their day to day need.



## SECTION IV

### LEADERSHIP

#### IV.1: BACKGROUND

Although there may be collective leadership within grass-root groups, empirical observations reveal that the leadership is being personified in a single person in most of the cases who works as the chief functionary on behalf of his group. Here the chief functionaries of groups have been traded as group leaders.

Survey data depicts that the highest proportion of group leaders belong to single family, percentages being 66.48 and 68.75 for male and female groups respectively. A single family has been defined here as one which is composed of a couple and its dependents. 33.52% of male group leaders and 22.66% of female group leaders belong to extended family composed of more than one couple and their dependents. Among women group leaders, 8.59% have been found to live as dependents with other families. They are either widowed or divorced (see table II.4).

The distribution of group leaders by marital status reveals that the overwhelming majority of them are married. Among leaders of female groups, 15.63% have been found widowed and 3.13% divorced (see table II.5). Though the widowed and divorced women of rural Bangladesh, particularly belonging to the poorest stratum, have empirically been found to live amidst social insecurity and degradation, findings of the survey show that they can very well attain such leadership or they are equally accepted as leaders.

Data on literacy among group leaders has been found very spectacular. Although 26.26% of male group leaders are illiterate, 29.61% of them had primary level of schooling from class I to class V and 26.26% of them had schooling at the secondary level, i.e., class VI to class X. As much as 17.88% of them received education of S.S.C. level or above. The educational background which male group leaders possess seems to be superior to that of the national average in this regard. Whether groups' leadership is being monopolised by the educated members is, however, an empirical question. The situation is reverse for female groups and as many as 75.00% of them has been found illiterate even though the percentage is lower than the national rate in rural Bangladesh(see table II.6).

Young and middle-aged persons have been found to be the leader of respective groups in most of the cases. This holds good both for male and female groups. The highest proportion of group leaders belong to the age group of 25-34 years, followed by 35-44 years of age group, percentages of group leaders being 37.99 and 40.63 for male and female groups respectively in the former age group and 34.81 for male and female groups respectively in the latter case (see table 11.7)

Many group leaders have been found to have previous organisational background. Some were associated with village co-operatives sponsored by IRDP before joining the present group. Some were also associated with different political parties. According to survey data, 32.40% of male group leaders had such background. The percentage is much lower for female group leaders of whom only 8.59% had such background (see table 11.8)

#### **IV.2: NATURE OF LEADERSHIP**

An investigation among old groups of three years of age and above reveals that almost all group leaders have been associated with their respective groups since their formation. Further analysis of data shows that 81.19% of male group leaders and 68.18% of female group leaders have been exercising leadership to respective groups from the very beginning (see table II.9)

Probably this characterises leadership stability with respect to time from one point of view. Probably this reflects the absence of dynamism with respect to transfer of leadership from another point. This phenomenon may also be viewed as such that the degree and intensity of awareness and capability of group members lags for behind that of the leader. Given a situation where all members of a group are critically conscious and active participants in respective groups, such stability may facilitate better regimentation and consolidation. In a different situation where the most of the members are passive onlookers, this, may lead to monopoly and abuse of leadership. Whatever the situation may be, this is question of profound interest whether a leader actually represents the collective will of the group and accountable to the group. An in-depth analysis of this phenomenon necessitates further investigation.

### **IV.3: VOLUNTARISM**

In the process of the mobilisation and organisation of the rural poor, the role of grass- root leadership is of utmost importance. These leaders are the persons who are to work with commitment and integration. They have to face inconveniences and oppositions from situations which are seldom favorable. They become the victims of conspiratory design of the local vested interest on frequent occasions. Particularly, they have to sustain financial loss for their involvement with such type of organisation.

Survey data reveals that 17.32% and 13.28% of male and female group leaders respectively have to sustain economic loss more or less regularly for their involvement with respective groups(see table II.10). This may eventually work as a discouraging factor for them with respect to their involvement with such type of work or service they render. It has been found that only 6.15% and 7.81% of male and female group leaders respectively receive economic benefit from the fund of respective groups, though not regularly, for their service(see table II.11). Voluntary spirit of group leaders has always been emphasised .But how far this can be sustained unless it is shared collectively. Empirical observations reveal that such voluntarism, often moulded by spirited romanticism in the initial stage, fails to sustain in the long run and it seems rather unrealistic to preach this sort of voluntarism to people with crippled economic condition.

Amidst this situation, the question of financial support to group leaders arises as a logical corollary. Also it encompasses the inherent danger that may replace the genuine voluntary spirit by avarice. However, findings reveal that the highest proportion of group leaders, both male and female, are not willing to receive any financial support against their service, percentages being 66.34 and 43.94 for male female group leaders respectively . Willingness to receive such support has been found among female group leaders to a relatively greater extent. 13.64% of them opined for such support ranging from taka 400 to taka 500 per month. Among male group leaders who expressed their desire to receive such support, the highest proportion desired the amount of up to taka 200 per month, the percentage being 10.89(see table II.12).

With regard to the source of fund for releasing such financial support to group leaders for their service, the majority expressed their opinion to receive it from the sponsoring organisation, Nijera Kori .Among group leaders desiring financial support, 38.24% of male leaders and 21.62 % of female leaders opted to receive it from their own organisational fund(see table II.13) .

The issue of providing financial support to group leaders for their service needs to be resolved immediately, since it may work as a disincentive to them in their organisational work in the long run. If they are to receive such benefits, the question naturally arises who will provide necessary funds, It seems from project proposals and other reports that Nijera Kori has been least interested to portray the organisation of the poor and the landless by its own signboard. Rather it intends to see it as an independent platform of the target population where Nijera Kori emphasises to limit its role with regard to that of an intervening factor. By providing direct financial support to target groups, there is every possibility that Nijera Kori may, ultimately, turn into a father figure contradicting its own thinking and action. As an alternative, raising organisational fund at the local level may be emphasised. Meanwhile, mobilisation of organisational fund has also been going on. This needs to be steered to a greater extent.

## **SECTION V**

### **TRAINING**

#### **V.1: TRAINING COURSE**

To facilitate continuous growth and development of grass-root groups, two types of training in the form of orientation sessions is being imparted to selected participants from different groups. First, there is a basic orientation course which deals with the analysis of the situation and problems at the immediate community level. Secondly, an advance course is arranged where the participants get oriented to analyse things in a broader perspective. Regional or centralised training, as has been arranged, has the advantage of bringing participant from different areas and situations together and helps to bring about the realisation that similar initiatives equally exist in different areas.

Findings reveal that 58.66% of male group leaders received basic orientation training. Such percentage is 44.53 for female group leaders. Proportion of group leaders having advance training is lower, percentages being 27.37 and 15.63 for male and female leaders respectively. Participation of females in training sessions have been found relatively lower than that of their male counterparts (see table II.14).

## **V.2 SELECTION OF TRAINEE**

The existing procedure of trainee selection has been found very simplistic. The majority of group leaders (83.54% of male and 73.75% of female leaders) expressed that trainees had been selected through discussion among group members. But in a sizable number of cases trainees are selected by the organiser of Nijera Kori without consulting their respective groups. Such percentages are 14.02 and 25.00 for male and female groups respectively. Few cases have been found where trainees are selected by leaders unilaterally (see table II.15).

With regard to their opinion about the selection procedure, 83.24% of male leaders and 80.47% of female leaders expressed their desire in favour of group discussion. Trainee selections by organisers of Nijera Kori have been least desired (see table II.16).

## **V.3 PERCEPTION OF TRAINEES**

The quality of training, as perceived by the participants, seems to be very satisfactory. 88.89% of male leaders and 90.16% of female leaders responded positively. The overall quality of the training program, however, cannot be judged based on this data alone, since opinions of group leaders only have been taken care of in this investigation (see table II.17).

## **SECTION VI**

### **EXPANSION**

#### **VI. 1: GENERAL POLICY**

Nijera Kori emphasises its expansion of field program in adjacent villages and areas where some grass-root groups already exist. This generally takes place when groups decide to expand. Further expansion is emphasised by existing groups and local organisers of Nijera Kori help only in accelerating the expansion process. In fact, group leaders play the vital role in the expansion process.

#### **VI.2: PRIMARY LEVEL EXPANSION**

Nijera Kori intends that all members of working age belonging to target households should involve them with grass-root groups. As a basic unit of social institution, the role and potentials of household, thus, can be fully exploited. Actual achievement in this respect is satisfactory to some extent. Among the households of surveyed group leaders, the majority have been found to have one or more members of grass-root groups other than the group leader coming from respective households. Such coverage within the household is relatively higher for those households to which female group leaders belong (see table II.18).

It has often been observed that such organisational activities are resisted from within the household, particularly from husbands or in some cases from the wives if participating persons. It has been found that wives of 34.57% of male group leaders and husbands of 25.96% of female group leaders are also members of different groups (see table II.19).

The highest proportion of cases reveals that husband/wives do not have any reaction to organisational involvement of their fellow wives/ husbands. Here only those cases have been considered where group leaders' husbands/wives are not members of groups.

33.96% and 27.27 % of male and female group leaders respectively have been found to be encouraged by their wives/husbands. Such percentages are 2.83 and 6.49 for male and female group leaders respectively, where they are being resisted by their wives/ husbands from their organisational activities (see table II.20).

### **VI. 3: FORMATION OF OTHER GROUPS**

It has been found that a sizable proportion of group leaders assisted in the formation of other groups in and outside their respective villages. Many male group leaders have been found to assist in the formation of female groups. But the formation of male groups by leaders of other female groups has been more widely observed. Group leaders, whose husbands or wives are also group members at the same time, have been found to be more active in this regard (see table II.21).

### **VI. 4: COOPERATION WITH OTHER NGO**

Nijera Kori is aware of unhealthy competition between different NGOs in many areas with respect to their field programs and is least interested to involve itself where other NGOs have been working with more or less similar objectives. Nijera Kori, through dialogue and discussion, always try to avoid such duplication and extend support to other organisations as far as possible without involving itself physically in those project locations.

One spectacular example may be cited in this regard. Nijera Kori has been jointly working with Proshika in two field locations, one in Ramgati in the district of Noakhali and another in Raojan in the district of Chittagong where Nijera Kori and Proshika have been organising female and male groups respectively. Such cooperation has been arranged at field levels where the organisers of these two organisations work together in a harmonious manner. Besides, cooperation also exists with some NGOs, where they agree not to present themselves physically in each others' area. Names of Proshika and UTO may be particularly mentioned in this respect.



## **SECTION VII**

### **MOBILISATION AND CONFLICT**

#### **VII.1: NATURE OF CONFLICT**

With the development of the organisation of the landless and other poorest sections of the rural population, the crystallisation of a new social force, the rural proletariat, is getting momentum. However, the organisation is being developed through conflict and confrontation every now and then. There are conflicts at the household level where resistance is put forward from within the family. This happens more frequently in cases of women participants. It has been tried to resolve this by organising the male folk as well. But grass-root organisations of the landless face much more opposition class. The landless group members are being victims of conspiracy, harassment and physical assault by the vested interest on frequent occasions.

#### **VII.2: RESISTANCE OF THE VESTED INTEREST**

The vested interest is always afraid of any emerging social force that challenges its centuries-old hegemony. They always conspire against landless groups, try to conspire against landless groups, try to confuse them through malicious propaganda, harass them by lodging fictitious allegation to the police and often assault them physically through their henchmen. Many such incidents happened during past years where the vested interest left no stone unturned to disperse and terrorise the organised groups of the landless. Two such examples have been cited below.

“They (the organisers of Nijera Kori) have also organised the landless to raise their voice against corruption which is so rampant at all levels that three-fourths of the grain assigned for food-for-work programs meant to benefit the poor is said to be swallowed by officials. A fight for an increase in the daily wages of the landless has been the other important plank of Nijera Kori's struggle. But it has to reckon with all-too-familiar nexus between the local police officials and the landlord. Consequently, the local power structure is arranged against it.

“In order to break the activists, the police had tried to implicate them in a large number of criminal cases, from rape to murder, even before conducting investigation despite their activities being legal and legitimate (Neerja Chowdhury Nijera Kori and Pilipina, Voluntary Action, vcl.24, no.9, AVARD, New Delhi,P. 352 )”.

“Eleven groups of the landless comprising about 130 members planted rubber and banana on khas land in Bani Para area in East Raajan. The local UP Chairman and other self seekers tried to harass the local poor by filing cases against them to the police. The local people brought out a procession to protest against these false and malicious allegations. Then a group of policemen entered the villages and assaulted some women. One woman named Halima was stabbed in the incident. The villagers then went to the police station to lodge complaint. But the police authority refused to accept the complaint (the Daily Azadi, Chittogong,18<sup>th</sup> August, 1981, translated)”.

### **VII.3:MOBILISATION AND AFTERMATH**

The recent history of Nijera Kori has been marked by some striking achievements with respect to the regimented behavior of organised male and female groups in different areas of Bangladesh. They have been holding protest meetings against social injustice and bringing out processions to voice their demands. Also there had been many incidents where police station and government officials were gheraoed by organised groups. Such incidents often get coverage in the press. Two such examples have been cited below.

Gherao as an instrument of struggle had been proved successful in trade union movements in urban areas of Bangladesh, particularly during the turmoiling years in late sixties. Recently this is being tested in rural areas successfully leading to positive results in favour of the demonstrators.

“We want food; we want cloth; we want job.Raisting such slogans, about two thousand landless peasants and women of Saghata Thana gheraoed the office of the SDO in Gaibandha. They also submitted a memorandum to him and raised demands for the eradication of corrupt practices in the food-for-work program, to declare Saghata Thana as a distressed area and to bring down the prices of rice and flour (Banglar Banee, 19<sup>th</sup> March, 1982, translated).”

“The construction work of a road connecting Daulatpur and Shehala, a project of CARE, started in last month. One thousand five hundred maunds of wheat were allotted for this purpose .It had been decided to offer 1.25 maund of wheat as wage for 1000 cft. of earthwork. But the chairman of the project committee who is also a member of the local UP paid the wage at a rate of 1 maund of wheat for the same amount of earthwork.

“In this situation, the landless peasants and workers brought out a procession in 19<sup>th</sup> March and held a demonstration led by Mr. Abu Taleb, a local organiser of a voluntary organisation in front of the office of the CO. When the demonstration was over, Abu Taleb went to a tea stall. At that time he was attacked by the above mentioned chairman and his henchmen. Abu Taleb was seriously injured and later on hospitalised. A complaint was lodged in the local police station in this regard.

“To protest against this incident, the agitating landless peasants and workers gheraoed the offices of the CO and OC . The demonstrators dispersed after having commitments on immediate necessary actions from both the officials.

“Than a team of representatives of landless peasants and workers met the DC of Kushtia and asked for immediate action in this regard. Directed by the DC, the SDO visited the place on 21<sup>st</sup> March where the incident took place and listened to the local landless workers. He assured them of a new project committee in replacement of the old one.

“On the other hand, the police recovered 226 maunds of wheat from the house of the above mentioned chairman which was misappropriated by him. The person was found absconding. One of his associates was taken to the custody by the police (Banglar Bane, 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 1982, translated).

## **SECTION VIII**

### **NIJERA KORI AND GRASS-ROOT GROUPS**

#### **VIII.1: FIELD OPERATION**

Nijera Kori work with grass-root groups of male and female population belonging to the poorest sections through its field-based organisers of which the proportion of male and female organisers is more or less equal. Project office is maintained only in three field locations where the work is mainly concentrated among the women population. These offices are used as training centers as well as provide accomodation to women organisers. Besides, there are few small centers used for training at the local level. Some trainers are also provided accomodation in these centers. There is a regional training centre in Nungola; about six kilometers away from the district headquarter of Bogra. All male organisers and quite a sizable number of female organisers work in their respective field locations and manage their accomodation on their own. They used to live in the houses of group members or sympathisers and work among the poor people of the surrounding villages.

#### **VIII.2: INTERACTION WITH GROUPS**

Since the organisers stay at door steps of the grass-root groups, it facilitates regular and intensive interaction between them. The organiser visits each groups after regular interval of time to provide necessary follow-up.

Groups also want regular interaction with the organiser of Nijera Kori. Survey data reveals that the highest proportion of male group leaders want the visit of the organiser to their respective groups once in every month, followed by fortnightly meetings, percentages being 35.75 and 28.49 respectively. 3.35% of male group leaders

do not feel any necessity of the presence of the organiser of Nijera Kori any more. They feel that they are capable enough to manage their problems on their own. For female group leaders, 56.25% want weekly meeting with the organiser, followed by fortnightly meeting, the percentage being 20.31. It is evident from data that female groups want to meet the organiser more frequently than their male counterparts (see table II.22).

### **VIII.3: PERCEPTION ABOUT ORGANISERS**

Given the socio-economic background of landless and women groups, the organisers seem to be alien to them. Hence the success of a development organisation like Nijera Kori largely depend on how its organisers are accepted among the target population and also how they try to win the confidence of the latter. Findings in this regard is satisfactory. 88.28% of female group leaders and 77.09% of male group leaders have been found quite satisfied with their respective organisers. 6.70% and 2.34% of male and female group leaders respectively expressed their opinion in favour of the replacement of organisers presently working with them. On the other hand, 5.03% of male group leaders and only 0.78% of female group leaders told that they had no contact with any field-based organiser of Nijera Kori. Few group leaders, 11.17% and 8.59% of male and female respectively, refused to make any comment in this regard (see table II.23).

### **VIII.4: RECRUITMENT OF ORGANISER**

Among field –based organisers of Nijera Kori, many have been working in areas where they come from. Also many have been working in different areas other than their own areas. However, the highest proportion of group leaders expressed that the organisers need to be recruited from areas where they work. Such percentages of group leaders are 50.28.44.53 for male and female respectively. 12.85% and 17.19% of male and female group leaders respectively expressed their opinion against local recruitment of organisers. However, 16.20% of male group leaders and 21.88% of female group leaders have been found without any such bias with respect to the recruitment of organisers (see table II. 24).

## **SECTION IX**

### **NIJERA KORI**

#### **IX.1: ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE**

The field operation of Nijera Kori is undertaken at three different spheres. Thana is the primary level operational unit. A coordination committee comprising representatives of the field-based organisers is responsible for policy decision and field operation in each Thana. The entire field involvement in Bangladesh is divided into four geographical regions. There is a coordination committee in each region having representations from Thana committees. The overall coordination rests on the central executive committee having similar representation from regional committees. In committees at each level, specific responsibility of management, field organisation and training lies with persons chosen democratically.

## **IX.2: INTERNAL DEMOCRACY**

Nijera Kori always emphasises democratic procedure with respect to policy decision. There is no administrative hierarchy in the organisation. All recruitments, transfers and policy decisions are taken at committee meetings at respective levels. Yet there are contradictions among the organisers, i.e., staff members, which are frequently exposed in different committee meeting and conferences.

For example, one has proposed an idea but failed to convince others present at the meeting. When a decision has been taken against his will, he feels alienated and it seems that the decision has been imposed on him. This reveals one of the major weaknesses of the traditional democracy where everyone has similar rights to express one's opinion but due to the lack of intellectual capability, one cannot establish one's opinion in the forum.

Universal democracy that gives value to each participating individual, thus, fails to work as a sound system of action where there are sharp intellectual differences among the participants. Those who can understand the concept better, can grasp the situation concretely and can suggest policy measures conclusively are able to establish their authority in a forum. Others, in such a situation, participate merely as passive observers. Further continuation of this phenomenon may hamper the consolidation and regimentation of the organisation.

## **IX. 3: UNITY OF THOUGHT**

Any concerted and regimented action necessitates optimum unity of thinking among the participants. This is, undoubtedly, the basic requirement of an organisation like Nijera Kori. Unless all participants are equally aware of the objective, work plan and policy consequence, it cannot continue as a viable forum. How far the organisers of Nijera Kori fulfill this condition is, however, an empirical question.

## **CONCLUSION**

- i. With respect to the development of an organisation of the rural poor, certain issues and problems need to be resolved prior to embarking on a viable strategy. Findings illuminated in preceding sections have revealed some positive features as well as some negative points. The positive aspects are to be consolidated and sustained whereas the weaknesses and shortcomings need to be overcome.
- ii. The composition of landless and women groups pose a fundamental problem to the organisers. The dilemma that arises is whether to emphasise numerical expansion or homogeneity while forming a group at the grass-root level. It may be impractical to suggest a generalised principle in this regard. The situation may differ from one area to another. Moreover, this envisages the problem of handling issues of contradiction and correlation among different sections of the poorer community. The bulk of the rural poor are exploited in the existing social system, though by varying degrees. This poses a two-fold problem: the expansion of the organisation without alienating any section that may play a positive role as ally in the struggle of the oppressed and to remain vigilant against the emergence of a privileged stratum within the organisation with relatively better economic background.
- iii. It is evident that participants of grass-root groups have their own short run survival strategies in order to maintain and improve their livelihood alongside the spirit of developing a broad-based organisation upheld by Nijera Kori. These two aspects need to be correlated and integrated in the perspective of the existing situation so that one does not develop at the cost of the other.



- iv. Groups' leadership have been found somewhat static which implies that such leadership is being monopolised. If it happens so, then it may work as a barrier in the development of a regimented and action-oriented organisation which presupposes the conscious participation which presupposes the conscious participation of all members. The organisers need to be alert in this respect so that there is a two-way interaction between the leader and other members and the leader is accountable to the members. To reach this, the members are to be more active and critically aware with respect to organisational activities.
- v. It is expected that advanced members of grass-root groups particularly the leaders, will uphold a very high level of voluntary spirit in organisational activities. It is also expected that leaders and members of groups should manage their organisational problems, particularly financial matters involved in their work, by themselves rather than handed over to them by Nijera Kori. This management aspect needs to be more emphasised in the training program of Nijera Kori and accordingly a special training module needs to be developed.
- vi. Participation of females in the training program has been found to be lower than that of their male counterparts. For the even development of the organisation, the female participation should be to a higher extent.
- vii. Perception of group members with respect to the management and operational strategies of Nijera Kori are to be taken care of by the organisers while re-organising their mode of approach and work from time to time. Frequent interaction with groups, particularly with the female, has been found to be the felt-need of the groups.
- viii. Last but not the least important is that the organisers should devote themselves to attain a higher level of unity among themselves with respect to perception, realisation and conceptualisation. Such unity will eventually lead to further regimentation and only then the internal democracy will be meaningful.

## APPENDIX II

**Table II.1:** Distribution of groups by membership type.

No. of landless in the group	Male		Female	
	Frequency	percentage	Frequency	percentage
All	43	24.20	40	31.25
Above 50%	124	69.27	78	60.94
Below 50%	9	5.03	5	3.91
Mil	2	1.12	-	
Nat aware	1	0.56	5	3.91
Total	179	100.00	1280	100.0

Components may not add to totals due to rounding.

**Table II.2:** Distribution of group leaders by opinion with respect to relationship with better off sympathisers.

Opinion about relationship with better off sympathisers	Male		Female	
	Category 'A'	Category 'B'	Category 'A'	Category 'B'
To accept as member	20 (46.51)	67 (54.13)	19 (47.50)	26 (33.33)
To treat as sympathiser	19 (44.19)	47 (37.90)	13 (32.50)	34 (43.59)
Nat to maintain any relation	2 (4.65)	4 (3.23)	8 (20.00)	16 (20.51)
No response	2 (4.65)	6 (4.84)	-	2 (2.56)
Total	43 (100.00)	124 (100.00)	40 (100.00)	74 (100.00)

Figures within parentheses indicate percentages.

Components may not add to totals due to rounding.

- Category 'A': Groups composed of landless members exclusively.
- Category 'B': Groups having landless members more than 50% of the total membership.

**Table II.3:** Distribution of group leaders by immediate objective of joining respective groups.

Objective of joining the group	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
To get land	12	6.70	4	3.13
To obtain credit	8	4.47	6	4.69
To participate in the FFWP	14	7.82	5	3.91
Economic betterment	41	22.91	52	40.63
Organisation	102	56.98	55	42.97
Net aware	2	1.12	6	4.69
Total	179	100.00	128	100.00

Components may not add to totals due to rounding.

**Table II.4:** Distribution of group leaders by family status.

Family Status	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Single	119	66.48	88	68.75
Extended	60	33.52	29	22.66
Dependent	-	-	11	8.59
Total	179	100.00	128	100.00

**Table II.5:** Distribution of group leaders by marital status.

Family Status	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Single	16	8.94	-	-
Married	162	90.50	104	81.25
Widowed	1	0.56	20	15.63
Divorced	-	-	4	3.13
Total	179	100.00	128	100.00

Components may not add to totals due to rounding.

**Table II.6:** Distribution of group leaders by level of schooling.

Literacy	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	47	26.26	96	75.00
Class I-V	53	26.61	26	20.31
Class VI-X	47	26.26	5	3.91
S.S.C. & above	32	17.88	1	0.78
Total	179	100.00	128	100.00

Components may not add to totals due to rounding.

**Table II.7:** Distribution of group leaders by age.

Age - Group	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Up to 24	16	8.94	8	6.25
25-34	68	37.99	52	40.63
35-44	61	34.08	42	32.81
45-54	25	13.97	17	13.28
55+	9	5.03	9	7.03
Total	179	100.00	128	100.00

Components may not add to totals due to rounding.

**Table II.8:** Distribution of group leaders by previous organisational

Previous organisational background	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Have such background	58	32.40	11	8.59
No such background	121	67.60	117	91.41
Total	179	100.00	128	100.00

**Table II.9:** Distribution of leaders of old groups by the period of leadership provided to respective groups.

Period of leadership	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Providing leadership since the formation	82	81.19	45	68.18
Involved with the group since its formation but became leader afterward	18	17.82	20	30.30
Joined the group later but attained leadership	1	0.99	1	1.52
Total	101	100.00	66	100.00

**Table II.10:** Distribution of group leaders with respect to any financial loss incurred or not due to involvement with groups.

Financial loss due to involvement with group	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Loss incurred	31	17.32	17	13.28
No loss incurred	148	82.68	111	86.72
Total	179	100.00	128	100.00

**Table II.11:** Distribution of group leaders whether they receive any economic benefit from respective groups for their service.

Whether receives economic benefit from group for the service rendered	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Receives	11	6.15	10	7.81
Does not receive	168	93.85	118	92.19
Total	179	100.00	128	100.00

**Table II.12:** Distribution of leaders of old groups with respect to their opinion about financial support they intend to receive.

Amount of financial support wanted	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
0	67	67.34	29	43.94
1-200	11	10.89	4	6.06
201-300	7	6.93	5	7.58
301-400	4	3.96	3	4.55
401-500	6	5.94	9	13.64
Not mentioned	6	5.94	16	24.24
Total	101	100.00	128	100.00

Component may not add to totals due to rounding.

**Table II.13:** Distribution of leaders of old groups by source from where they like to receive economic benefit.

Source	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Organisational fund	13	38.24	8	21.62
Nijera Kori	21	61.76	29	78.38
Total	34	100.00	37	100.00

**Table II.14:** Distribution of group leaders by type of training received.

Type of training	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Basic	105	58.66	57	44.53
Advance	49	27.37	20	15.63
Both	37	20.67	16	12.50
No	62	34.64	67	52.34
Total	179	100.00	128	100.00

Components may be not add to totals due to multiple responses.

**Table II.15:** Distribution of groups by method of existing trainee selections.

Present method of trainee selections	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Through group discussion	137	83.54	59	73.75
Selected by leader	4	2.44	1	1.25
Selected by organiser	23	14.02	20	25.00
Total	164	100.00	80	100.00

Groups covered by the training program have been considered here.

**Table II.16:** Distribution of group leaders by opinion about the method of trainee selections.

Opinion about trainee selection	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Through group discussion	149	83.24	103	80.47
Selected by leader	12	6.70	5	3.91
Selected by organiser	6	3.55	11	8.59
No response	12	6.70	9	7.03
Total		100.00	128	100.00

Components may not add to totals due to rounding.

**Table II.17:** Distribution of trained group leaders by their opinion about training.

Opinion about training	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Good	104	88.89	55	90.16
Time allocated is inadequate	2	1.71	-	-
Could not grasp	11	9.40	5	8.20
Not necessary	-	-	1	1.64
Total		100.00		100.00

**Table II.18:** Distribution of group leaders by No. of household members belonging to groups.

Other household members being member of group	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
0	76	42.46	47	36.72
1	72	40.22	54	42.19
2	19	10.61	20	15.63
3+	22	6.71	7	5.47
Total	179	100.00		100.00

Components may not add to totals due to rounding.



**Table II.19:** Distribution of married group leaders by the membership of their respective husbands/wives.

Membership	<u>No. Of married group leaders</u>			
	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Husband/wife being member	56	34.57	27	25.96
Husband/wife being not member	106	65.43	77	74.04
Total	162	100.00	104	100.00

**Table II.20:** Distribution of married group leaders whose husbands/wives do not belong to any group by husband's/wife's reaction.

Reaction of husband/wife	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Encourages	36	33.96	21	27.27
Discourages	6	5.66	4	5.19
Resists	3	2.83	4	6.49
No reaction	61	57.55	47	61.04
Total	106	100.00	77	100.00

Components may not add to totals due to rounding.

**Table II.21:** Distribution of group leaders by type of other group formed by them.

Group formed	<u>No. of group leaders helped to form other groups</u>					
	<u>Husband/wife being members of group</u>		<u>Husband/wife does not being members of group</u>		<u>Single/divorced/widowed</u>	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Male	20 (35.71)	1 (3.70)	56 (52.83)	4 (5.19)	4 (23.53)	1 (4.17)
Female	-	9 (33.33)	2 (1.89)	17 (22.08)	-	10 (41.67)
Both	22 (39.29)	5 (18.52)	8 (7.55)	1 (1.03)	3 (17.65)	1 (4.17)
Nil	14 (25.00)	12 (44.44)	40 (37.74)	55 (71.43)	10 (58.82)	12 (50.00)
Total	56 (100.00)	27 (100.00)	106 (100.00)	77 (100.00)	17 (100.00)	24 (100.00)

Figures within parentheses indicate percentages.  
Components may not add to totals due to rounding.

**Table II.22:** Distribution of group leaders by opinion about frequency of meeting with the organiser.

Frequency of meeting	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	19	10.61	5	3.91
Weekly	31	17.32	72	56.25
Fortnightly	51	28.49	26	20.31
Monthly	64	35.75	23	17.97
Bi-monthly	6	3.35	2	1.56
Quarterly	2	1.12	-	-
No Necessity	6	3.35	-	-
Total	179	100.00	128	100.00

Components may not add to totals due to rounding.

**Table II.23:** Distribution of group leaders by opinion about respective organiser.

Opinion about organiser	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Good	138	77.09	113	88.28
Should be replaced	12	6.70	3	2.34
Does not have any contact	9	5.03	1	0.78
No response	20	11.17	11	8.59
Total	179	100.00	128	100.00

Components may not add to totals due to rounding.

**Table II.24:** Distribution of group leaders by opinion about recruitment of organiser.

Recruitment of meeting	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
In favour of local recruitment	90	50.28	57	44.53
Against local recruitment	23	12.85	22	17.19
Have no bias	29	16.20	28	21.88
No response	37	20.67	21	16.41
Total	179	100.00	128	100.00

Components may not add to totals due to rounding.

## APPENDIX III

### LANDLESS ORGANISATION

#### RATIONALE

Nijera Kori has been emphasising the necessity of a nation-wide platform of the landless and other oppressed sections of the rural population and have been striving to develop such a macro-level organisation, Bangladesh Bhumiheen Samity. How the organisers of Nijera Kori conceive the concept and rationale of such an organisation can be illuminated through their discussions and dialogues. In a meeting of the executive committee of Nijera Kori, the following realisations had been observed.

“The landless have been realising that they will never be able to liberate themselves until and unless their own organisation is developed on a nation-wide scale.

“Given certain limitations typical to NGOs, they cannot progress further beyond a certain limit with respect to the organisation of the landless.

“The demands of the landless and small farmers cannot be materialised in the absence of their own organisation.

“If we fail to help the landless to identify and decide concrete policy actions aiming at their liberation, they will be confused in the long run.

“Recently help landless workers and peasant conferences reveal that the landless have been disintegrating and have been failing to play a vital role as an organised social force. The idea of the merger of the landless groups with any political party will, however, alienate them from other political parties working with similar objectives. Hence without doing tailism of any political party, they should have their own and independent platform of action (Nijera Kori: Minutes of the meeting of the executive committee, 16<sup>th</sup> April, 1981, translated).”

## **METHODOLOGY**

Having fully realised the rationale of a nation-wide landless organisation, concrete methods of action had been proposed to steer up the process of its formation. The following decisions had been adopted in this regard.

“To discuss and exchange opinions with other NGOs and political parties who have been working with similar objectives.

“To develop the leadership from amongst the landless in each area by holding meeting and conferences.

“After some period of time, a report will be prepared focusing the progress of the endeavour in this regard. In the meantime, organisation and mobilisation of the landless in different areas is expected to the required extent.

“It is felt that, under existing circumstances; the landless may not efficiently perform the task in a nation-wide scale and may not be able to coordinate the whole process on their own. Subject to conducive objective conditions, it may become necessary that a vanguard group of organisers from Nijera Kori might join the organisation of the landless and work with it directly (ibid) .”

## **PROGRESS**

Having decided to work intensively to help the formation of a nation-wide organisation of the landless participated by the oppressed male and female population of rural Bangladesh, certain progresses have been achieved in this regard. A temporary nine-member convening committee has been formed comprising representatives from advanced grass-root groups. Arrangements have been going on to prepare the manifesto, constitution and program of the proposed organisation to be finalised in a meeting of the representatives of grass-root groups which is expected to be held very shortly.

## **PROBLEM AND PROSPECT**

Given a general realisation with respect to the necessity of the formation of a landless organisation, the prospect of a macro-level forum of the rural poor seems to be convincing. However, this has also led to an intensive debate and sharp polarisation of opinions and concepts among the organisers of Nijera Kori, particularly with respect to the nature of the proposed organisation and its relationship with the former.

It is expected that the initiation of such an organisation will usher a new era in the mobilisation of the oppressed mass in rural Bangladesh leading to far-reaching consequences. On the other hand, Nijera Kori has reached a critical juncture where it may have undergone a qualitative transformation. The success, however, primarily depends on how the organisers of Nijera Kori resolve relevant conceptual problems and contradictions among themselves and come forward with regimented zeal. The organisers are yet to resolve these problems among themselves. Here, a few dialogues have been cited to facilitate some understanding of the situation how they view the particular phenomenon. The debate originated in a special meeting of the organisers of Nijera Kori held recently.

**R:** First we need to clarify ourselves what will be the relationship between the landless organisation and Nijera Kori. Otherwise we will have to face complexities in future.

**M:** We portray ourselves as an auxiliary force to the landless organisation. But, in many cases, we provide leadership. This seems contradictory.

**B:** Nijera Kori and the proposed landless organisation have separate entities. We work for the landless but the organisation of the landless will be of their own. If we intend to provide leadership, we will face opposition from political parties. If we decide to provide leadership to the landless, we should stop taking salary from Nijera Kori.

**R:** If any political party acts wrongly, the party is to be blamed and not any individual belonging to that party. But here, there are tendencies to blame individuals.

**S:** We have been working with the landless for many years. Our efforts have not been sufficient enough. We need to discuss with other organisations and parties about this issue. There will be a conference of

landless representatives very shortly. Accordingly a nine-member convening committee has been formed. We have been working with Nijera Kori. If anyone feels that one can work better and more intensively by involving himself with the landless organisation, one can chose it on his own.

**R:** We need to be well aware of sources of our fund. Where from the money comes? Guerrillas in El Salvador are getting funds from others. Also the oppressive regime of El Salvador is getting funds from elsewhere.

**S:** We are not receiving any fund from the Regan Administration, nor from any reactionary government. We take only untied assistance.

**K:** We need to have self-criticism. Some people have been given national leadership who are not even capable to provide leadership at the Union level.

**B. t:** If any organiser of Nijera Kori dose not like to work directly with the landless organisation, he should not be compelled to do so.

**S:** It seems that we have nothing to do except cattle raising We must go for new thinking. The landless groups have been moving forward. Even many of them have been talking about political power.

**R. b:** We have arranged landless conferences in different areas under the banner of the landless organisation. Then why do we hesitate to prepare an organisational framework for them.

**T:** It is not feasible for us to go for the formation of a political party. We cannot do it, since our level of consciousness is not up to the mark. Besides, many of us belong to different political philosophies. We need to follow a certain philosophy instead of many.

**K:** We have already started our work with respect to the formation of a landless organisation. It is not possible to work in this line being involved within the framework of a voluntary agency. I am willing to involve myself with the landless organisation leaving the banner of Nijera Kori.

**A:** Our discussions reveal that the proposed landless organisation will be a trade union for the rural workers. There is no doubt about it. But who will provide leadership to this organisation. We belong to different political quarters. We are yet to organise our thinking in an integrated manner (Nijera Kori:Minutes of the special meeting of organisers held in 14<sup>th</sup> July, 1982-edited).

The above-mentioned dialogues reveal some features with respect to thinking and conceptions of the organisers of Nijera Kori. Main features have been mentioned below:

- a) Nijera Kori has certain limitations typical to a voluntary organisation.
- b) Many staff members belong to different political quarters and they have not yet been prepared to perceive things in a similar manner.
- c) The difference between a trade union organisation and a political party with respect to their character, objective and program have not been realised by all members.
- d) The nature of relationship and contradiction between a forum like Nijera Kori and mass organisation like the proposed one is not fully understood by all.