**GENDER, CLASS AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN DEVELOPMENT: STATE
INTERVENTIONS AND CIVIL SOCIETY RESPONSES IN BANGLADESH**

by

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A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Political Science

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Chair, Department of Political Science

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Abstract

The dissertation explores why and how the state in Bangladesh has been unable to link gender, class and environmental concerns in its development interventions and how civil society has responded to such an inability. Recognizing that the state and civil society are interdependent structures, composed of varied interests, it argues that the state is firmly grounded in society and reflect society's class relationships which are composed of exploitation, oppression and structural sources of inequality.

The dissertation, however, maintains that a focus on class alone does not express the complexity of social and economic inequality. Gender and environmental issues are equally fundamental to class issues. Environmental issues cannot be isolated from class issues or gender issues because environmental degradation has a differential class/gender impact in Bangladesh and thus these issues are interconnected. The state, drawing on neo-liberal conceptions, assumes the linkage uncritically and finds the solution in simply adding gender and environmental concerns to existing development policies. The dissertation argues that this approach is inadequate in addressing the need for structural transformation.

However, the research goes beyond identifying the inadequacy of state policies to provide insights and grounds for understanding development alternatives from a holistic

perspective in which gender, class and environmental concerns are significant and for formulating an alternative theoretical perspective to the prevailing development model. It demonstrates that people's responses to the crises in development theory and practice, which emerge out of the contradictions within civil society and from weaknesses in the role of the state, are evolving in the form of social movements in the country. These micro-struggles for change and restructuring, though still scattered and unorganized, are having an impact at the macro level as they not only challenge the prevailing notion of development, implicit in state policies, but also provide some basis for a development alternative to the system as it now works. They act as points of countervailing power in the social context to transform oppressive structures in society and to create a space in which interconnections of gender, class and environmental concerns are taken into consideration.

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Acronyms

ADAB	Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh
ADB	Asian Development Bank
BARD	Bangladesh Agricultural Rural Development
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BELA	Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association
BJMS	Bangladesh Jatiyo Mahila Sanghstha
BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
BRDB	Bangladesh Rural Development Board
BRIDGE	Briefings on Development and Gender
BUP	Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad
BWDB	Bangladesh Water Development Board
CEN	Coalition for Environmental NGOs
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CUSO	Canadian Universities Service Overseas
DAWN	Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era
DEPC	Department of Environmental Pollution
DGIS	Directoraat Generaal Internationale Samewerking (Netherlands Development Cooperation)
DWA	Department of Women Affairs
EEC	European Economic Community
ESAF	Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
FAP	Flood Action Plan
FAP 20	Tangail Compartmentalization Pilot Project
FCDI	Flood Control, Drainage and Irrigation
FFW	Food for Work
FFYP	Fourth Five Year Plan
FPCO	Flood Plan Coordination Organization
GAD	Gender and Development
GATT	General Agreement on Trade and Tariff
GNP	Gross National Product
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
GSS	Gono Shahajjo Sangstha
HDI	Human Development Index
HYV	High Yield Variety
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IDA	International Development Agency
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOV	Inspectie Ontwikkelingssamenwerking to Velde
KSS	Krishak Samabay Samity
LGRD	Local Government and Rural Development
MMR	Maternal Mortality Rate
MOWCA	Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs
NEMAP	National Environmental Management Action Plan
NGDO	Non-Governmental Development Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NK	Nijera Kori

NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PMUK	Proshika Manobik Unnayan Kendra
POE	Panel of Experts
PVO	Peoples' Voluntary Organization
SAP	Structural Adjustment Program
SFYP	Second Five Year Plan
SIDA	Swedish International Development Authority
SNSP	Saptagram Nari Swanirbhar Parishad
TANDP	Thana Afforestation and Nursery Development Project
TFYP	Third Five Year Plan
UBINIG	Unnayan Vikalper Niti Nirdharani Gobeshona
UN	United Nations
UK	United Kingdom
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCEDAW	United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UST	Unnayan Shohajogy Team
VGD	Vulnerable Group Development
WB	World Bank
WEN	Women's Environmental Network
WID	Women in Development
WVTPA	Women's Vocational Training for Population Activities

Glossary of Bengali Terms

Ain	law
Beel	depressed water bodies like the lake
Gher	enclosure
Haor	large and depressed water bodies
Jatiyo Mahila	
Sangstha	National Women's Organization
Kendra	center
Khas	government owned
Khrishak	peasant/farmer
Krishi	agriculture
Kulak	surplus
Mahasamabesh	gathering
Mahila Samity	women's association
Mahila Parishad	women's organization
Manobik	human
Nari	woman
Nijera Kori	Doing it on One's Own
Proshika Manobik	
Unnayan Kendra	Human Development Center for Training and Education
Sal	Shorea Robusta
Salish	traditional village court of justice
Samobay	cooperative
Saptagram	seven villages
Sromik	worker/laborer
Taka	a unit of Bangladesh currency
Thana	subdistrict
UBINIG	Policy Research for Development Alternatives
Unnayan	development
Upazila	subdistrict

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The development interventions of the state and the blueprint solutions offered by international donors in addressing the multifaceted crises affecting Bangladesh -- poverty, ecological crisis, gender conflicts and class conflicts -- have been unable to connect different actors or groups within society. The linkage of the issues of gender, class and the environment in sustainable development is ignored in their policies and programs, which have remained largely confined within existing development models and power structures. This dissertation examines why the state in Bangladesh has been unable to link gender, class and environmental concerns in its development practices and how civil society has responded to such an inability. Although the importance of other issues in sustainable development, for example ethnicity, race, religion, culture and political participation is recognized, the focus here is on gender, class and environmental concerns, because of the important interlinkage of the issues in the context of Bangladesh.

People's responses to such inability and crisis in development theory and practices have evolved in the form of new social movements¹ and participatory micro level development experiments in the country. These movements at the

local level, more commonly known as the grassroots, offer closeness to the people, knowledge of local conditions and responsiveness to local needs. Grassroots organizations are distinguished generally from national or regional organizations which are relatively remote from the people who are supposed to be involved in and benefit by development. It is argued in the thesis that although at a very nascent stage, these movements and experiments challenge the prevailing notions of development. Implicit in these responses is an attempt to carve out a space for an alternative in which the connections between gender, class and the environment have a central role. These movements for social change and for enhancing people's causes are strongly supported by some local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Bangladesh. Although NGOs usually have a dependent relationship with foreign donors which often leads to an internalization of donors' discourse in their programs and many of them are confined to service delivery roles, some of the local NGOs in Bangladesh may be seen as grassroots support organizations, who have adopted an alternative approach. Such an approach not only questions the underlying epistemological assumptions of development itself, but also attempts to link gender, class and environmental concerns in their search for sustainable development. This dissertation recognizes the importance of such NGOs because of their links to the growth of social movements and their

important role in the consolidation of civil society. This convergence of interests across social forces in civil society makes it possible to conceive of these numerous micro struggles for change and restructuring as having an impact at the macro level. They show that the process of fundamental rethinking and restructuring of the dominant development model has been initiated.

It is argued in the thesis that these responses in civil society have the potential to carve out an alternative to the prevailing development model in which the connections between gender, class and the environment are significant. By examining the underlying causes of the inability of the state and donor policies in linking such concerns in selected development projects in Bangladesh, and exploring the varied responses in civil society to such interventions, the thesis makes a contribution to the broader development debate. It not only reflects upon the changing state/society relations in the specific context of Bangladesh, but provides more general insights for understanding development from a holistic perspective in which gender, class and environmental concerns are important. In this way, it contributes to ongoing debates about formulating an alternative perspective to the dominant development model. The following discussion in this chapter introduces the political economy of the country and examines the interconnectedness of the issues of poverty, gender, class

and environmental degradation in the context of Bangladesh. It analyzes the objectives and rationale for research and discusses the methodology employed and the research design.

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF BANGLADESH

Bangladesh emerged as a new nation state in 1971. Before that it was a part of Pakistan, which emerged from colonial rule as a politically independent nation in 1947. At that period of time, development models were taking shape which provided analytical frameworks for the efforts made by the newly independent states to hasten the pace of economic growth, to build social infrastructure and to improve the living standards of their people. The liberal approach to development (also known as the modernization paradigm) dominated mainstream thinking on international development from the 1950s into the 1970s. This dominant development paradigm was adopted by most post-colonial states, including Pakistan (and later Bangladesh).

Within this approach, the problem of development in the South was conceived as a lack of modernization in all its aspects. Integration into the world economy was seen as the route to development and any policies or social structures that prevented such wholesale integration were viewed as obstacles to progress. Development was seen as a linear process in which a nation or people proceeded from underdevelopment, which was characterized as backward/

traditional/primitive, to full development, which was identified as modern/rational/industrialized (Rostow 1960). It was argued that with economic growth, the benefits of modernization (i.e., better living conditions, wages and education as well as adequate health services and the like) would "trickle down" to all segments of the society. Criticizing the modernization process, Jane Parpart observes,

the problem of development became one of bringing 'backward' colonial peoples into the modern (i.e. developed) world. This was seen more as a logistical problem -- how to go about it, how quickly it could be achieved etc.-- than as a goal that might itself be questioned (Parpart 1993:447).

Women rarely, if ever, were considered as a separate unit of analysis in the modernization literature of this period, nor was the impact of modernization on different classes in society. "It was assumed that the norm of the male experience was generalizable to females and that all would benefit equally as societies increasingly became modern" (Rathgeber 1990:491). This paradigm also assumed that natural resources are inexhaustible, thereby failing to provide an adequate theoretical account of environmental degradation and its impact on society.

Dependency scholars in the 1960s and 1970s provided an important critique of the dominant Western development paradigm and opened alternative development perspectives by questioning its benefits for the South at large. These

theorists believed that wholesale integration into the world economy had created a dangerous dependency which serves the international capitalist order and not the developing "third world"² society. From the pioneering work of Frank (1967) and Baran (1968) to Amin (1974), Saul (1979), Leys (1975), Evans (1979), Cardoso and Falleto (1979), and Kitching (1982) among others, there have been significant variations in the theme of dependency and underdevelopment. Although the critical stances of these debates provide useful insights, raise important questions and contribute to an understanding of the continued deterioration of Southern economies, they do not take account of the environmental factors nor of the issues of gender. According to Poona Wignaraja,

both Modernization and Marxist paradigms are now proving too simple to relate to the crisis -- of poverty, ethnic conflicts, ecological conflicts, etc. -- that have emerged in Southern societies. Though Marxist theory was a little more explicit about issues of social justice and equity, issues such as participation, culture, gender and equity and ecology were central to neither paradigm (Wignaraja 1993:13).

It would take us too far afield to discuss the debates and changes in analytical fashion that development analysis has undergone. However, insofar as the impact of the "development" process on the well-being of the people in Bangladesh is concerned, the succeeding decades did not bring an improvement in the living conditions of the people. Instead, the development process contributed to the growth of poverty, to

an increase in economic and gender inequalities, class conflicts and to the degradation of the environment.

Many negative consequences surfaced when Bangladesh (which was then a part of post-colonial Pakistan) attempted to imitate the development paths of industrialized societies. The model chosen by the new regime had three major components: 1) central planning, control and coordination as a top down process, 2) industrialization and expansion of the modern sector as a means of rapid economic growth and 3) assistance from developed countries to bridge the savings, foreign exchange and technological gaps. The development planners assumed that the country would be carried on the back of a modern urban industrial sector, until a new society was created. However, one fundamental issue that the development planners and practitioners of the country ignored was that Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) was a predominantly rural society, where the dominant development model based largely on mainstream economics would be at best indifferent or at worst inimical to the interests of large numbers of people who live in rural areas. It was soon evident that the dominant model failed to set in motion processes of social change in the country that ensured material well-being to large numbers and were both participatory and humane.

When Bangladesh emerged as an independent nation in 1971, after a long nine month civil war with Pakistan, it inherited

the problems of coping with mass poverty and unemployment, malnutrition, hunger, disease, illiteracy and recurring natural disasters. Insofar as governance is concerned, in the first two decades, the country experienced long periods of authoritarian control, with brief democratic episodes. The principal regimes during this time were those headed by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (1972-1975), Ziaur Rahman (1976-1981) and Hussein Mohammad Ershad (1982-1990). In Bangladesh, succession has never been a smooth process; Sheikh Mujib and Zia were both assassinated, while Ershad was forced to resign. After Ershad, an interim government took over and within a few months had superintended a parliamentary election widely perceived as the country's first free and fair national voting in a very long time (Blair 1994:7). The winner was the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), which formed a government under the leadership of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. The social forces in civil society -- women's groups, human rights groups, peasants, laborers, trade union members, students, major professional groups, business community and non-governmental organizations -- rendered their full support to the pro-democracy movement in 1990 which resulted in the downfall of President Ershad (1982-1990).

In the current democratic regime, issues have become increasingly politicized. Some NGOs have taken up policy advocacy not only on matters which concern the smooth running

of their institutions, but also on general political and developmental issues, for example, the rise of fundamentalism, shrimp cultivation, Flood Action Plan, social forestry and National Environmental Management Action Plan (NEMAP). One effort currently underway is an initiative to set up a series of dialogues on developmental issues, under the aegis of the Center for Policy Dialogue across the country between parties working in related areas as well as with citizens who are directly affected by the issues. These clearly manifest the change democratization brought about in civil and political rights. NGOs, women's groups, environmental groups, peasants and other social forces in civil society in Bangladesh are now more and more vocal compared to the previous periods of authoritarian rule.

In spite of its transition to democracy the country continues to face formidable development problems. Bangladesh has been regarded as "providing an acid test for development policies and highlights many of the issues facing the least developed countries in the world" (Faaland and Parkinson 1976:7). Among a host of developmental challenges facing Bangladesh, some of the most significant ones are gross levels of socio-economic inequality, low rates of economic growth, a very tenuous natural resource base, high rates of population growth, a very low land/person ratio and threats of natural disaster (Q.K.Ahmad 1992:72).

The country is caught in a vicious cycle of poverty. A significant portion of the population is below the poverty level and depends to a great extent on the natural resource base for their subsistence, which itself is very limited. This is particularly true in the rural areas where 87 percent of the total population of the country lives. A profile of the rural poor in Bangladesh is given in Table 1 which reveals the nature of poverty in rural areas. It shows that 86 percent of the rural population live below the poverty line. While 20 percent of the rural poor are landless, 63 percent are small holder farmers without sufficient land to produce enough food for their families. Female-headed households comprise 16 percent of the rural households, which indicates the disproportionate burden these women have to bear to raise their families.

TABLE 1
Profile of the Rural Poor in Bangladesh

Rural population (% of total)	87
Rural population below poverty line (% of rural)	86
Landless population (% of rural)	20
Smallholder farmer population (% of rural)	63
Small and artisanal fishermen (% of rural)	6.4
Household headed by women (% of rural)	16

Source : The State of the World Rural Poverty, IFAD 1992

Poverty is a symptom of institutional structures that initiate, maintain and increase inequities within and between societies (UNDP 1992, Pollard et al. 1992). Development assistance has contributed to this process by promoting programs that, through the provision of capital and material input, consolidate vested interests and facilitate the monopolization of resources by specific groups. Such resource control gives these groups access to, and power over, additional resources by increasing their social, economic and political strength and flexibility. The result is that the benefits of development programs rarely "trickle down" to the poor, since benefits tend to be captured by those in politically or economically powerful positions. The outcome of these conditions has increased impoverishment and marginalization for the poor and the vulnerable in Bangladesh. The majority in the country lack access to available productive assets and thereby to the opportunity to become productive and to contribute towards local and national development. The situation is growing worse day by day and successive governments in Bangladesh have seemed helpless to reverse the trend.³ Indeed, neither official donors nor the Government of Bangladesh has demonstrated a serious intention to address it.

The socio-economic situation of women in Bangladesh presents a dismal picture as compared to that of men. Not only

do they comprise the largest share of those living below the poverty line in Bangladesh, they have far less access to resources than men and are a marginalized section of the population. Systematic gender differences in the distribution and access to resources are revealed by mortality rates, health and nutritional status, wage rates, literacy rates and sex ratio. In Bangladesh, the female literacy rate of 22 percent contrasts with 47 percent for males (Table 2). Similarly, the figures on mean years of schooling shows gender disparity with 3.1 years for males and 0.9 years for females (ages 25 and up) in 1990 (Table 2). Women are even more disadvantaged than men in Bangladesh in terms of health and nutrition. Bangladesh has one of the world's highest maternal mortality rates at 4.7 per 1000 live births in 1992 (Table 3). Although Table 3 shows there has been a decline in maternal mortality rates over the years, it still remains high. Child marriage, frequent pregnancies and inadequate pre and post-natal care are among the main factors responsible for maternal mortality. Table 3 also shows that the maternal mortality rate is higher in rural areas than in urban areas, indicating the double disadvantaged position of women in rural areas. Malnutrition is a major problem for pregnant and lactating women. Preferential intra-household food allocation to males worsens malnourishment among females who eat last and least, throughout their lives.

Table 2

Adult Literacy Rate (as % of age 15)			Mean Years of Schooling (25+)		
Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
35	47	22	2	3.1	0.9

Source : Human Development Report, UNDP 1993

TABLE 3
MATERNAL MORTALITY RATE (MMR)
(per 1000 live births)

Year	National	Rural	Urban
1986	6.5	6.7	5.8
1988	5.7	6.0	5.3
1990	4.8	5.0	4.3
1992	4.7	4.8	4.0

Source: Statistical Pocketbook of Bangladesh, BBS, 1993:88

As regards employment, women are subject to discrimination and have a disadvantaged position in the labor market. They have fewer employment opportunities, less occupational mobility, lower levels of training and lower pay for the same or similar work. Although women constitute 48.6 percent of the total population in Bangladesh, with a sex ratio of 106 males per 100 females (BBS 1993:3), their share in the civilian labor force was only 20.1 million in 1990 as compared to 31.1 million for males (Table 4). Females are obliged to work for very low wages. The wages paid to female laborers vary for agricultural and non-agricultural work, but are consistently lower (by about 50 percent to 60 percent)

than for male laborers, which is evident from Table 5. In the private sector, too, women are generally found to be drawing lower wages than men, as can be seen from the garment industry which draws female workers heavily from the rural surplus population. Wage differentials between male and female in the garment industry may be seen in Table 6.

TABLE 4

CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE BY SEX AND RESIDENCE 1990 (millions)

Residence	Both sex	Male	Female
Bangladesh (total)	51.2	31.1	20.1
Urban	8.7	6.6	2.1
Rural	42.5	24.4	18.1

Source : Labor Force Survey, 1990 in Statistical Pocketbook of Bangladesh, 1993:105

TABLE 5

BANGLADESH : AVERAGE WAGE RATES 1989 (Taka per day)

	Agricultural sector	Non Agricultural sector
Total		
Both sexes	31.45	42.78
Male	31.62	45.96
Female	27.74	20.86
Urban		
Both sexes	31.96	45.03
Male	32.50	48.58
Female	27.33	17.00
Rural		
Both sexes	31.45	42.17
Male	31.60	45.23
Female	28.01	21.76

Note : 1989 exchange rate:Taka 1.00 = US \$ 0.03

Source : Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Report on Labor Force Survey, 1989, .

TABLE 6GENDER DIFFERENTIAL OF WAGES IN THE GARMENT INDUSTRY (1990)
(wages :Taka per month)

Categories of Workers	Male	Female
Supervisor	2,317	2,426
Operator	1,238	1,069
Ironer	1,345	886
Sewing helper	598	439
Cutting and finishing helper	846	603

Note : 1990 exchange rate : Taka 1.00 = US \$ 0.03

Source:Ministry of Women and Children Affairs(MOWCA)1995:21

There have been a number of studies dealing with poverty, institutional factors and poor women in Bangladesh. These studies have concluded that poverty is an inescapable reality and while nearly everybody in the rural areas is affected, women bear the brunt of poverty (Alam 1985, Arens and Van Buerden 1977, Abdullah and Zeidestein 1982, Westergaard 1983, Rahman 1987, Abecassis 1989, Kabeer 1991, Rahman and Sen 1993). Nilufar Ahmed, a woman activist and a member of the Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP), a development research organization in Bangladesh, observes that,

the bottom line is disparity and inequality as characteristic of the political economy of the country. The rural women in the country do not have the basic rights of food and shelter, they do not have access to land, water or forests. However, these women do not want welfare or short term solutions, they want work and an opportunity to do something -- a broad structural change in the way their role is conceived in development plans (Interview : May 1994).

The majority of the women in Bangladesh are unable to benefit from their participation in the political, socio-

cultural and economic life of the nation. Discrimination against woman remains rampant in all spheres of activity in Bangladesh. Despite the existence of laws intended to safeguard women's rights in Bangladesh, a wide gap exists between legislation and implementation. Roushan Jahan observes,

many aspects of the legal system in Bangladesh reflect the continuing dominance of patriarchal attitudes in society, for example, the lack of effective agencies to provide interventions or support for women's legal rights and the inordinate amount of time and expense which acts as an effective disincentive to women wishing to take legal action (Jahan 1988:56).

Thus, it is apparent that in spite of constitutional affirmations of sex equality, state legislation and institutions in Bangladesh underpin gender subordination and dependence.

Successive governments in Bangladesh adopted some of the 'women in development' (WID) rhetoric⁴ (often as a way of getting more aid) but this has not provided the operational framework for improving the situation of women. The realities of changing needs of women and their empowerment were not reflected in the policies formulated and programs that followed. The tendency remained to enhance women's roles within the confines of stereotypical feminine activities and the conceptualization of women solely as wives, mothers or homemakers continued. According to David J. Lewis,

this highlights the contradictions of WID policy, which has simultaneously increased the power of men and the state over women (through growing control of production and reproduction) while providing in formal terms a framework for the advancement of women's interests" (Lewis 1993:29).

It may be concluded, then, that development priorities in the country over the years have persisted in ignoring gender inequalities or of interlinking gender with other issue areas.

Although attempts have been made from time to time in the policies of international donors to modify the narrow techno-economic notions of development and to effect some reforms, their position continues to be based on conventional development thinking and practice. The development process is still considered mainly as an economic exercise, including the allocation of scarce resources by governments and big private sector corporations. The basic assumption continues to be that the modernization/industrialization process, with some consultation with the people and the goodwill and assistance of "developed" countries and the international community, will bring about positive social change. The poor are still considered to be the objects and the targets of the process and rarely as subjects.

Government development programs have often served to exacerbate the problems, further concentrating the control of resources in the hands of the few. According to Lewis, "since independence, Bangladesh's successive governments have tended

to ignore the landless in favor of those with resources in a farmer-based development strategy" (Lewis 1993:49). The government's approach, based on the Comilla cooperative model,⁵ in his view addressed those in the countryside owning agricultural land, mainly the (male) farmers. The reliance for the implementation of development policies and programs on the machinery of the national bureaucracy has contributed to a consolidation of central power and the stifling of local initiatives. Thus alienated, people find no meaningful opportunity to participate. Rather than encouraging the self reliance and productive use of available assets that must be the basis of sustainable development, prevailing policies too often have encouraged welfare dependence of the people on the government and of the government on foreign donors.

Successive regimes which came to power in Bangladesh found it useful to use aid resources for reinforcing their control over the development process without seriously altering the social or economic structures. Table 7 clearly illustrates that there has been an increase in foreign aid disbursements over the years. Rehman Sobhan, Executive Chairman of the Center for Policy Dialogue observes,

Aid has gradually moved from a temporary measure to repair a war devastated economy and as a supplement to domestic savings, to a permanent crutch needed to keep the economy functional and the polity viable. It is no surprise that as the economy goes downhill and the donors become more strident in their demands the state becomes more alienated from the people (Sobhan 1991:93).

TABLE 7
FOREIGN AID DISBURSEMENTS TO BANGLADESH FOR MAJOR DONORS,
1986-87 to 1989-90
(figures in millions of US \$)

Country or Agency	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
<u>BILATERAL DONORS</u>				
Canada	100	68	119	104
Denmark	35	71	17	51
France	42	20	6	37
Germany (Federal Rep)	63	42	57	50
Japan	332	315	340	335
Netherlands	37	63	52	43
Norway	44	34	25	35
Sweden	20	50	31	37
United Kingdom	46	37	44	52
United States	124	143	95	100
<u>MULTILATERAL DONORS</u>				
Asian Development Bank	166	179	299	274
European Community	15	68	67	47
United Nations system	51	117	66	58
World Bank	251	330	297	463
All other donors (bilateral and multilateral)	269	103	153	123
Grand Total	1595	1640	1668	1809

Source : Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (1993:407).

Politicians in the country routinely pronounce that the people are the sources of all power, but this is done usually as a ploy to gain, retain and legitimize power. Very little has been done to improve peoples' lot by those who held power in the past. According to Meghna Guhathakurta of Dhaka University, "the cultivation of populist slogans like 'rural development' or 'poverty alleviation' were aimed more at generating support rather than forcing a set of hard decisions

to increase the productivity of the rural or oppressed sectors" (Interview, May 1994). All of this clearly illustrates that political and economic power in Bangladesh remains firmly concentrated in the hands of a small elite committed to preserving the very socio-economic institutions that pauperize the majority of the rural people by depriving them of a political voice and of access to productive resources. Foreign assistance has contributed primarily to funding the patronage and the bureaucracies that sustain this dysfunctional imbalance (ADAB 1988:5).

There is a growing literature on the extent and consequences of Bangladesh's "aid dependence". This literature suggests that aid has not led to economic growth or the alleviation of poverty (Sobhan 1982, 1990, 1991, Guhathakurta 1990, 1991, Crow 1987, Islam 1977). Rather, aid has contributed to the inefficient use of capital, inappropriate choices of technology, inadequate use of existing productive capacities and an import intensive pattern of consumption. The aid dependence literature suggests that aid has helped create an elite class aligned with the political regime which is dependent on aid to maintain its income and consumption patterns. According to Sobhan,

the higher the inflow of external assistance, the more profits accrue to this class. Directly, these intermediary classes function as commission agents for foreign suppliers. Indirectly, this class derives profit from the distribution of goods imported by the state

trading corporation (Sobhan 1981:105).

A more self-reliant development strategy would be inimical to the interests of this class, since it would reduce their income and prestige.

In the last decade, donor assistance has increasingly shifted from projects to policies, largely due to the IMFs and the World Bank's focus on Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). SAPs began in Bangladesh in the mid eighties (1986/87). At present SAPs constitute nearly a third of the total aid package to Bangladesh (Jahan 1995:71). Based on neoclassical assumptions, the IMF and World Bank changed their lending policies to Southern countries, shifting from project oriented funds to conditional funds. Conditionalities imposed on new loans induced debtor countries to divert resources from domestic production of goods and services to production for exports. Broadly, the measures adopted in Bangladesh under adjustment included : fiscal deficit reduction, increasing the role of the private sector (particularly through privatization of state enterprises) and trade policy reform including devaluation, import liberalization and export promotion (Grande 1993).

Although there are few studies to date which examine in detail the impact of SAPs or gender implications of adjustment policies in Bangladesh, the general conclusion is that

adjustment policies have not produced an overall positive impact on economic performances; rather, they negatively impact on the income of the poor (BRIDGE 1994:73, Jayaweera 1993, IMF 1991, Grandea 1993, Jahan 1995). A study undertaken by the IMF estimates the overall income loss to the poor to be around 3 percent during the first adjustment package (1986/87-1989/90) and around 5 percent during the first year of the ESAF (1990/91-1992/93) (IMF 1991).

Also, in the last few years, research from around the world has highlighted the gender differentiated impact of SAPs (Gladwin 1993, Mackenzie 1992, Elson 1991, Moser 1989, Shiva 1993). These concerns have led donors and national governments to develop gender-aware approaches to structural adjustment. Measures in Bangladesh included nutrition programs for pregnant and nursing women, health care for women and children, improving educational opportunities for girls in rural areas, training women in construction and targeting credit to women, expansion of Food for Work (FFW) and Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) programs in providing food wage employment to women (IMF 1991). According to Jahan "these are, however, largely palliative measures intended to soften the adverse impact and do not challenge the basic directions of SAPs" (Jahan 1995:71).

The preoccupation with growth in the country's development policies and the neglect of gender, class and

ecological considerations have exacerbated class and gender inequalities and impinged in crucial ways on the political power balances, economic institutions and social fabric of the society. All these factors have led to the inability of the state structures, even with increasing centralization and militarization, to manage the multifaceted crises in the country. The crisis Bangladesh faces is no longer merely the poverty crisis. It is now taking the forms of ecological degradation, gender conflicts and class conflicts. These are not isolated phenomena or issues, but are interrelated and interconnected. Taken together, they have deep consequences for the fragile democratic processes at work in the country and the tasks of nation building.

INTERCONNECTIONS OF GENDER, CLASS AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN DEVELOPMENT

An alternative perspective to the modernization paradigm has begun to emerge in development thinking, highlighting previously ignored issues : gender, class, the environment and their multiple connections. However, government policies in Bangladesh influenced by the IMF and the World Bank are increasingly based on a market approach. As may be seen from the findings of the case studies discussed in Chapter Four, some of the these policies have even contributed to the rapid depletion of the country's natural resources and common

property resources and the increasing appropriation of what remains by a few. Although there is as yet inadequate data base to indicate the exact extent of environmental degradation in Bangladesh, available information provides sufficient pointers to warrant considerable concern and possibly alarm. Degradation of the country's natural resource base is manifest in disappearing forests, deteriorating soil conditions and depleted water resources (Rahman and Huq 1993, Adnan 1991, Haider 1993). These have particularly adverse effects on poor rural households because of the greater dependency of such households on communal resources. Many of them survive within a subsistence economy based on the biomass -- that is, on products obtained from plants and animals. Common property resources like grazing grounds, water bodies and forests provide poor rural households with some livelihood security. These resources contribute in varied ways to the village economy. In addition to providing fuel, fodder, water and food, they also provide a wide range of products that are used both within and outside the home. They further provide income and employment through the direct sale of certain products and the use of others in home-based industry. However, the decline in common property resources and increasing privatization and concentration of ownership in the country are reducing the availability of such resources which has serious implications, especially for poor rural households in Bangladesh. Their

livelihoods are in crisis because they are the victims of the process of acute concentration of ownership of resources. Rarely have the planners in the country understood that in predominantly agrarian societies like Bangladesh, basic survival for the poor is deeply dependent upon access to and use of natural resources, what is more commonly known as common property resources. Any alteration in the institutional mechanisms governing this use not only impact differentially upon different strata, but also gives rise to social conflicts.

It may be mentioned here that deep seated contradictions exist between different groups with conflicts of interest mostly in the rural areas of Bangladesh. There are sharp relationships of dominance and dependence. These relationships give power to the dominant (the landlord, the trader, the moneylender, the bureaucrat), bringing about a crisis in immediate survival for the poor. Serious divisions exist even among the poor themselves, based on religion, gender and age. These class and gender differentiations in society are not taken into account in government projects and development programs. Their technocratic, fragmented, sectoral, and project approach is incapable of bringing about any meaningful social change that will not benefit the rich at the expense of the poor or the powerful at the expense of the powerless. The crises that are sparked by acute inequities resulting from the

development process also impact on internal political processes and democracy. Significant sections of the people are denied participation and alienation increases.

In addition to the role of class, there is also a critical gender dimension, for women are the ones most adversely affected by underdevelopment and environmental degradation in Bangladesh. This is so because roles and responsibilities related to natural resource management and patterns of ownership and access to natural resources are rooted in the pre-existing gender division of labor. It is the women in poor peasant households who do much of the gathering and fetching from the forests, village commons, rivers and wells. In addition, women of such households are burdened with a significant responsibility for family subsistence and they are often the primary (and in many female-headed households, the sole) economic providers.

In a national workshop on the Environment and Women : Policies for Sustainable Management of Natural Resources, organized by the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB) and United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), 24-26 November 1991, in Comilla, Bangladesh, grassroots women emphasized that poor people are the victims of environmental degradation caused by overconsumption, affluence and greed of the rich and the powerful. They ridiculed the notion that "women are managers, fixers or

preservers of nature". One women observed,

in order to become managers of nature, we have to have access to and control over natural resources like land, water, forests, seeds, saplings etc. We cannot plant trees as we have no land, we cannot take care of water and trees because we have no access to or control over those resources (cited in N. Ahmad 1993:6).

Although women of poor rural households (whether male or female-headed) bear a significant responsibility for family subsistence, the fulfillment of this responsibility is strongly constrained not only by the unequal sharing of household resources, but also by their unequal access to earning opportunities and agricultural land and by the decline in common property resources. This gender and class differential impact of environmental degradation reveals that there are interconnections between environmental degradation, women's status and socio-economic inequalities in Bangladesh.

Uncoordinated and uncontrolled development projects in a country with a limited resource base as Bangladesh harm the environment and hamper sustained development. These unsustainable and shortsighted management practices often lead to forest removal, discharge of toxic chemicals, over exploitation of fisheries and building of embankments, with negative consequences for the people and the environment. This development paradigm sets in motion a destructive model which often begins with the construction of large scale dams, flood control embankments, promotion of agro-chemicals for

agricultural production, monoculture tree plantation, large scale commercial fishing and spawning of new industries. These cause destruction of forests, degradation of soil fertility, loss of bio-diversity, pollution of water systems, destruction of fish habitats, and increase in salinity, soil erosion and siltation of river beds. The social and economic conditions of the people who depend on the natural resource base for their livelihood are further marginalized. Poor women and children are the hardest hit. In this growth-oriented development model, traditional popular knowledge systems which value sustainable use of natural resources are downgraded and devalued in the name of science and technology.

In analyzing the impact of the dominant development model on the countries of the South, Poona Wignaraja states that,

people were treated in the praxis of the old paradigms as objects of history, rather than as its subjects. They were non-participatory observers and fell victims to hierarchical, centralized bureaucratic processes in both the development and political processes (Wignaraja 1993:14).

The growth-led economic development model pursued by the state in Bangladesh and encouraged and sponsored by international financial institutions seeks unlimited growth, based on the claim that an increase in GNP is "development". The mobilization and productive management of local resources is undermined by such welfare oriented development policies. It is not much bothered by the concept of sustainability and

the carrying capacity of the environment. Nor does it address the root causes of gender and class disparities and gaps which persist in society and the interconnections between them. Such growth oriented development policies and programs have been largely ineffectual at alleviating poverty in Bangladesh. Neither have they been able to address the issues of environmental degradation, class inequities and gender gaps in development.

OBJECTIVE AND ARGUMENT OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study is to examine how and why the state has failed to address the multifaceted crises in Bangladesh and how civil society has responded to the failure of state structures. As the majority of the people in the country live in the rural areas, the focus is on the rural social structure.⁶ The inability of state structures in Bangladesh to mediate tensions within and between different groups in society and address the multifaceted crises in the country is creating new responses from the people, particularly the poor and the vulnerable and women. As local people react to the crisis in their lives, pressure groups and spontaneous and localized organizations emerge that see themselves as struggling for land rights, fishing rights, gender equality, environmental sustainability, class equality and a wide array of development issues that directly affect their lives. These peoples' organizations build horizontally

along social and economic sectors in society.

The people's movements and micro level grassroots experiments are the result of broader based people's responses to ecological, class or gender conflicts. These responses emanate from the weaknesses that appear in the role of the state and from the contradictions resulting from the interventions of transnational capital. Larger and larger number of people are no longer willing to accept exploitative or repressive regimes and state structures or a development paradigm that excludes them. As these people struggle to respond to the multifaceted crises in their lives and in the process deepen their understanding of their situation, they not only express dissent but also provide some basis for a developmental alternative to the system as it now works.

The micro level experiments and people's movements in Bangladesh are not homogeneous and differ in their origins, as is examined in a later chapter. All represent varying degrees of mobilization, conscientization⁷ and organization for development. Some of the people's movements have been sustained over time, others are brief eruptions and die down after a while. The essential point is that these are the outcomes of a process of mobilization, conscientization and organization at the micro level that has the potential to lead to structural and social change.

Although there is great potential energy and the will to

change, the problem is that energy does not always manifest itself spontaneously and needs to be harnessed. To initiate the process of mobilization and enable people to assert their right to participate in development as subjects, it often becomes necessary for external facilitators and agents of change, who are sensitive to the needs of local people, who can initiate and catalyze the process and who have the capability and infrastructure to organize the creative energies of the people at the micro level. People's movements cannot survive or create an impact in isolation, however, if they are properly linked and coordinated, they can become a countervailing power in the social context and help to widen the space for change.

In Bangladesh there is strong support for people's causes from some non-governmental organizations which seek to facilitate the aims of peoples' organizations and have been working in rural areas of the country. There is gradually emerging a convergence of interest between these non-governmental organizations and the poor and the vulnerable people of the rural areas in the country. Although this convergence is by no means comprehensive, it is indicative of a conscious attempt to address some of the fundamental issues that have been ignored in the policies of the state. The women's movement in Bangladesh and its impact on gender and equity issues is equally significant. This movement differ

sharply from feminist movements in the West and cannot be understood purely in terms of the generalized paradigm of 'women in development' into which much of the analysis of women's issues has been locked. There is an increasing body of positive evidence from women's movements and development experiments indicating that poor women contribute significantly to economic and social development particularly in the informal sector and represent a social response at the micro level to the crises in their lives. Environmental movements are also significant and demonstrate how people face the multiple crises in their lives.

These social movements may arise spontaneously or be initiated by sensitive external facilitators and local change agents. These movements represent a new social force, which has come to stay and can no longer be ignored. They are emerging out of the contradictions within civil society and from weaknesses in the role of the state. This demonstrates that people are no longer ready to tolerate polarization and inequity in society and are resisting the forces that oppress them. The issues of people's participation, conscientization and the building of countervailing power are part of an ongoing social process, the long movement towards social and structural change.

METHODOLOGY

Much of the discussion of the political economy in

Bangladesh has reflected upon the nature of class relations in society and the role of the state in the development of such class relations (Jahangir 1979, 1982, Sobhan 1981, 1982, Rahman 1986, K.T.Hossain 1991, Westergaard 1985, Blair 1973, 1994, Jansen 1987, 1991, Siddique 1985, Khan 1989, Wood 1994, Arn 1984, Alavi 1973). Only a few have studied gender in the context of state and civil society in Bangladesh and the interconnections between class and gender relations in the country (White 1992, Guhathakurta 1985, Jahan 1988, Cain et al. 1979). Also, only recently have scholars started linking development and environmental concerns (Rahman and Huq 1993, Adnan 1991, Haider 1993, Currey and Karim 1993). None of these works has, however, examined the underlying causes of the inability of the state in linking the issues of gender, class and environmental concerns in their policies and programs or of the responses in civil society to such state policies. This thesis attempts to make a contribution to this scholarly concern by examining state policies on selected issue areas and analyzing the responses in civil society to such state policies. With the mounting crisis of development and the crisis of the state and civil society, past attempts at development theory are in disarray. This exploration of the emerging new premise for development thinking and action as they are manifested in the positive experience of new social movements and participatory micro development experiments in

Bangladesh is therefore timely. This dissertation is a contribution towards understanding people's movements and experiments and through these, the larger issues of rethinking development and democracy in Bangladesh. The approach adopted in this dissertation gives a central place to the analysis of the interconnections of the issues of class, gender and environment in their interactions with the civil society and the state. This approach to state and civil society is original in bringing together diverse theoretical stands and interconnecting class, gender and environmental concerns in development. It is intended to fill the gap in the existing literature on Bangladesh which largely ignores these connections.

For analytical background, I have drawn on neo-Marxist class analysis to analyze state/society relations in Bangladesh. I have also used the theories of civil society and new social movements to advance my arguments that there are visible responses in civil society to state policies, which makes a critique of the dominant development model, and more importantly, which has the potential to change the oppressive structures in society. I have also drawn on alternative development approaches propounded by some Southern scholars which link gender, class and environmental concerns in their discussion of political economy and which emphasize empowerment at the grassroots to restructure the power

structures in society and redefine development goals. Although I have drawn on such secondary material for analytical coherence, the thesis is original, because it brings together multiple theoretical approaches in a way never done before for Bangladesh.

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze how and why state institutions in Bangladesh have been unable to incorporate and interlink gender, class and environmental concerns in sustainable development, and how civil society has responded to such an inability. This study is based on field work in Bangladesh, as well as my experience of growing up and living in the country, -- a country that makes for a rich case study, given its high poverty rates, fragile and degraded ecosystem, gender inequalities and class stratification. The thesis makes a critique of state and donor policies, which rely on the assumptions of a conventional development paradigm. It questions the sustainability of the development policies of state institutions and international donors and the assumptions on which they rest. As will be discussed in the chapters below, my research results refute the conventional paradigm's assumptions. The result reveals the strength of the social forces in civil society in Bangladesh in challenging such assumptions and providing insights for alternatives to the dominant development paradigm.

By concentrating on the role of people as subjects of

development, instead of as objects acted upon, the hope here is to replace a passive negative image of the people with an active and positive one, in which they act as agents of social change and make strong critiques of the dominant development paradigm. The thesis leads to new ways to think about conditions under which the social forces in a country become agents of social change.

This is an exploratory study intended to provide insights and grounds for formulating alternative perspectives to the dominant model of development. Instead of testing a hypothesis, the thesis attempts to analyze, describe and assess the impact of prevailing policies and responses to it. The study relies on both primary and secondary sources. For my primary research, instead of a formal and structured technique of data collection, such as questionnaire-based surveys, I used unstructured interviews and group discussions to make inquiries and collect case study material. This is because I think that surveys and questionnaires are inadequate for critically analyzing and assessing such complexities of interrelationships among issues as the topic demands and in comprehending the sensitivities of varied interest groups in society. Although the thesis draws on secondary material for its analytical background, much of the research is original in that it relies extensively on interviews and personal communication with individuals representing both the state and

civil society.⁸ Much emphasis is given to the method of observation as a considerable amount of time was spent visiting the areas studied.

The primary evidence I rely upon in support of my theoretical case is based on a field trip to Bangladesh from April to June 1994. While in the field, I conducted a literature survey on the topic and extensively reviewed government and NGO documents, newspapers, and academic papers. Formal and informal interviews and discussions, and meetings with academics, government officials, resident representatives of major and minor international donor agencies, officials and field staffs of NGOs, members of grassroots organizations, womens' organizations and peoples' organizations formed an important part of my field work. It was difficult to get appointments to meet senior public officials, academics and consultants due to their extremely busy schedules. In spite of these difficulties, I was able to meet a significant number of academics and consultants specializing in the field. I interviewed several senior government officials in the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Ministry of Forest and Environment and the Ministry of Irrigation and Flood Control.

The Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB), a coordinating organization of NGOs was particularly helpful in providing me with materials and relevant documents. I also interviewed members and field workers of several NGOs

in Bangladesh, notable among them being Nijera Kori (NK), Proshika Manobik Unnayan Kendra (PMUK) (henceforth referred to here as Proshika), Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), Saptagram Nari Swanirvar Parishad (SNSP), Unnayan Bikalper Niti Niddharani Gobeshona (UBINIG), Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP) and Women for Women. The three NGOs that I focus on -- UBINIG (Policy Research for Development Alternatives), Nijera Kori (Doing it on One's Own) and Proshika (Human Development Center for Training and Education) -- were particularly helpful in providing me with the opportunity to visit their project areas. I conducted semi formal interviews with staff members at their head office but also learned a great deal from informal discussions with field workers. Both staff at the head office and field staff helped me to gain a broad understanding of NGO programming, particularly institution building activities. They provided extensive information regarding their experiences of working with local communities and people at the grassroots.

Beyond meeting with people and interviewing them, visits to the project areas of both NGOs and the government provided an opportunity for direct observation of environmental and social conditions and the degree of people's participation. Informal discussions with local people in such project areas provided a glimpse of local perspectives, their perception of environment, gender, class, poverty and population issues and

how they perceive the role of both state and NGO institutions in addressing these issues. I visited the Women's Vocational Training for Population Activities (WVTPA) center of the Government of Bangladesh at Sharishabari Thana of Jamalpur district, which is a government project on family planning and population control. I also visited one of the project areas of "Thana Afforestation and Nursery Development Project" (TANDP) of the Government in Kaliakoir upazila and social forestry programs of the NGO Proshika in that same upazila. I visited the shrimp cultivation areas in Paikghacha, where the NGO Nijera Kori is active in conscientizing the people against the adverse impacts of shrimp cultivation and the ecological agricultural project of UBINIG in Tangail. I interviewed and had discussions with poor people in these areas who were affected by government development projects and were the victims of environmental degradation. Particularly, I had discussions with a number of women in these areas who are differentially affected both by class and gender structures in society. I found that many of these people were very concerned and aware of what is happening to their lives. I observed that many of them are associated in one way or the other with environmental activist movements or women's organizations or with progressive NGOs in voicing their concerns. These direct interactions provided useful insights in comprehending the nature of responses in civil society in Bangladesh to

governmental interventions.

ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

Following this introduction, Chapter Two examines the nature of state and civil society in Bangladesh. It examines the theoretical approaches to these concepts in the context of Bangladesh and how these approaches have linked gender, class and environmental concerns. The chapter argues that state and civil society are interacting and interdependent structures. The state, which is both an instrument and an arena of class struggle, penetrates civil society through its multiple forms of intervention. Civil society in turn penetrates the state through the erection of protective trenches against oppression, injustice and inequality. The wide variety of responses in civil society to the multifaceted crises and the collective efforts to bring about social change in Bangladesh represents a form of countervailing power and provides a critique of the dominant development framework based largely on mainstream economics which have guided major interventions into the lives of people in the name of development.

Chapter Three critically analyzes the theoretical perspectives linking gender, class and the environment in sustainable development. It presents the different conceptual frameworks within which these issues have been considered. The conceptual frameworks of ecofeminism and the "Women and the Environment" perspectives are critiqued, and useful approaches

(alternative development perspective) for this dissertation identified. The theoretical framework for this study not only attempts to link gender, class and environmental concerns in sustainable development, but also theorizes how institutions and social forces are making the linkage and what impact it has in challenging prevailing notions of development.

Chapter Four looks at the development interventions of the state in Bangladesh on gender and the environment and examines how such interventions have made interconnections between gender, class and environmental concerns. The chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, I have focussed on government's gender and environmental planning and policies. The second section examines selected government programs on gender and environmental issue areas. The population control and family planning program of the government is studied to analyze the nature of government policies on gender and how environmental degradation is linked in a negative way to population control. The three other areas of focus are on government social forestry programs, International Development Assistance (IDA) financed shrimp cultivation projects and government water resource management programs which illustrate the environmental consequences and gender/class differential impact of unsustainable development projects. On the basis of these empirical facts, the chapter argues that the state in Bangladesh has been unable to

and interlink gender, class and environmental concerns in their development interventions.

Chapter Five examines and analyzes the wide variety of responses in civil society to state interventions in development. It focuses on the women's movement and environmental movement as grassroots responses in civil society to state interventions in development and their collective efforts to bring about social change in Bangladesh. It also focuses on those NGOs that work as grassroots support organizations and play the role of an animator in conscientizing the people and mobilizing them to assert their right to participate in development as subjects. Three case studies are undertaken -- Nijera Kori's conscientization program against harmful effects of shrimp cultivation, UBINIG's ecological agricultural program as a response to 1988 floods in Bangladesh and Proshika's social forestry program of protecting degraded sal forests based on community participation. On the basis of these case studies, the chapter argues that the approaches taken by these NGOs are holistic and link gender, class and environmental concerns, in a way that vividly contrasts with the paternalistic, technocratic approach of the government discussed in Chapter Four. These programs of the NGOs may be seen as innovative responses in civil society to a rejection of the dominant development model pursued by the state. Though these responses are still

scattered and unorganized, they are all part of a continuing process of political, economic and social change.

Chapter Six summarizes the discussions in previous chapters and argues that through raising mass consciousness, building countervailing power and initiating equal access for the poor, the dominant structures in society could be transformed and changed. Such responses in civil society have the potential not only to change state/society relations but also to question the basic premises on which such relations rest.

The basic contention of the thesis is that people's responses to ecological, class or gender conflicts in civil society in Bangladesh emanate from the weaknesses in the role of the state and from the contradictions of transnational capital. As these people struggle to respond to the multifaceted crises in their lives through social movements and micro level development experiments, they not only express dissent but also provide some basis for a developmental alternative to the prevailing system. Such an alternative not only highlights the dynamics of change in state and civil society relations in the specific context of Bangladesh, which is discussed in the next chapter, but also provides more general insights for understanding development from a holistic perspective in which gender, class and environmental concerns are important.

NOTES

1. Not all new social movements are positive. Some of them, although they provide a critique of Western notions of development and democracy and imperialism -- often arise from religious fundamentalism. Sometimes vested interests also manipulate the people in the name of social movements. The processes analyzed here are the more spontaneous and positive social movements, people's movements and experiments.
2. I have used the term third world within quotes because I do not agree with the assumption that the three regions of the world as diverse as Africa, Latin America and Asia can be lumped together in one undifferentiated category. While exhibiting certain similarities, the countries of these regions have important differences as well.
3. Successive governments in Bangladesh did not have development plans and policies that were significantly different.
4. Women in Development (WID) emerged as a visible field of policy and action in most of the international development agencies and in many countries, especially those which are dependent on foreign assistance. The successive five year plan documents of Bangladesh have articulated the official perspective of government WID objectives, and these have changed over the years following the trends established by the donors. These plans are discussed in Chapter Four. The WID approach focuses only on how women could better be integrated into ongoing development initiatives. This approach avoids questioning the sources and nature of women's subordination and oppression and focuses instead on advocacy for more equal participation in education, employment and other spheres of society. Drawing on liberal feminist thinking in the West, WID policy makers and planners focused on modernizing "Third World" women, not on understanding their lives and experiences. Most development projects for women adopting this approach are aimed at the poorest women and are designed with very small scale goals.
5. The Comilla Cooperative Model was developed primarily by A.H. Khan at the Bangladesh Agricultural Rural Development (BARD) agency. In the 1960s, the Comilla Cooperative model achieved a measure of success and international recognition.

Its 'two tier' co-operatives were intended to promote an equitable Green Revolution Strategy through farmers' cooperatives known as Krishak Samabay Samity (KSS) to assist with agricultural extension and provide a structure for need-based farmers organizations. The approach appeared to work under the intensive 'laboratory conditions' of Comilla District, but attempts to 'scale up' the model across the country weakened its innovative character and left the 'formal cooperative' embedded in the rigid bureaucratic structures of the Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB). As increasing landlessness became the dominant feature of changing agrarian structure, the approach lost its relevance. According to Just Faaland and J.R. Parkinson, although the cooperative system remains important to government agricultural development programs in Bangladesh, it has met with only limited success (Faaland and Parkinson 1986).

6. Of the 111.4 million people living in the 147,570 square km of Bangladesh, approximately 85 million live in rural areas (Statistical Pocket Book of Bangladesh 1993:3).

7. The term 'conscientization' is derived from the philosophy and methodology of Paolo Freire. According to Freire, 'conscientization' is a process of education where 'men' not as recipients but as knowing subjects achieve a deepening awareness of the sociological reality which shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality (de Silva et al. 1979:56). In his theory of 'historical conditioning' he states that, in dependent societies and during transitional phases, the oppressed do not yet have a 'critical consciousness' but rather a semi transitive or 'naive transitive' or 'popular' consciousness. This historical cultural 'reality' leads them to 'internalize the values of the dominant groups'.

8. A list of interviewees is given in Appendix A.

CHAPTER TWO

STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF BANGLADESH: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Traditional theories of the state have lost their pre-eminence in the present context as there appears to be a widespread skepticism on both the left and the right about the efficacy of the state, leading to the search for significant non-state actors. Approaches which focus on the distinct role of civil society have gained prominence and have been used in different ways across the ideological spectrum to explain changing state/society relations. Within the liberal tradition, state and civil society are conceived as distinct and autonomous spheres of institutional and social activities, where a decaying state is in conflict with an emerging democratic civil society. In contrast, neo-Marxist scholars perceive state and civil society as interactive structures, where the two spheres are integrally connected. Post-modern approaches use theories of new social movements to argue that such movements give voice to hitherto marginalized actors in civil society and have the potential to incite a broad popular movement to transform oppressive structures in society.

In this chapter, I explore the diverse theoretical approaches to state and civil society and examine how different theories have been applied to Bangladesh. I draw on neo-Marxist class analysis to analyze state/society relations

in the country, because I think that the state in Bangladesh is grounded in society and largely reflects class relations which constitute a terrain of struggle, exploitation and resistance. I also draw on the post-modern civil society approach because I think that the focus of struggles and resistances do not necessarily involve class action, that is, they can be individualized and indirect or encompass other social categories such as ethnicity or gender or other social issues such as the environment. I think the post-modern emphasis on difference and multiplicity is crucial to understanding the multiple responses in civil society and is not necessarily inimical to other approaches.

I argue that a new breed of actors in civil society are gradually emerging in Bangladesh interested not in state power but rather in creating a free space that is not dominated by the state. Civil society in Bangladesh does have a distinctive class character. However, a focus only on class does not express the complexity of the experience. The key to understanding social and economic inequalities is to grasp the relations through which they are reproduced, to look at gender and environmental concerns and how they interact with class. Thus, the approach adopted in this thesis gives a central place to the interconnections of class, gender and environmental concerns and its interactions with state and civil society.

THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

State and civil society have been theorized from many different perspectives. Within the liberal tradition, the state acts as a neutral arbiter mediating various conflicts of interest within society. In this conception, the sources of injustices and inequalities in civil society are ignored. Civil society is viewed as constituted on the basis of the complementarity and reciprocity of roles in the social division of labor (Huntington 1968, Apter 1965, Lowenthal 1976). Within the liberal tradition, there exists a division between state and civil society in which civil society exists as a sphere autonomous and distinct from the state.

The Marxist view envisages the state either as an instrument of class oppression, which the dominant class uses to subordinate the other classes and subsume their interest to its own, or, in the structuralist view as an arena of class struggle. In both, civil society is structured by exploitation, oppression, domination, subordination and antagonism of class interests (Alavi 1973, Kalecki 1972, Raj 1973). Antonio Gramsci reformulated the vision of an orthodox Marxist conception of civil society and revived the concept of civil society as a central organizing principle of social theory (Wood 1990:63). His ideas are a principle influence on neo-Marxist thought. He criticizes the liberal attempt to draw a clear distinction between state and civil society and

insists that the two spheres are integrally connected (Gramsci 1971:262). In his view, state power is maintained not only through the formal institutions of "political society" (government, political parties and military) but also by building hegemony through many of the institutions of civil society, such as the church and the media. Civil society is understood as a sphere of indirect domination where the dominant class is able to construct hegemony. In his view, class power has no visible point of concentration in the state, but is diffused throughout society and its cultural practices. Counter hegemonic movements thus must also concentrate their efforts on the terrain of civil society, rather than a direct assault on the state.

Recent theorizing from neo-institutionalist or neo-statist perspectives have focussed more explicitly on the architectural role of the state in society, its impact on social and political processes through its policies and the patterns of relationship evolved with various groups (Evans, Skocpol and Ruschemeyer 1985, Poulantzas 1973, 1980, Miliband 1973, Carnoy 1984, Offe 1975, Tilly 1975, Stepan 1978, Kohli 1987, Skocpol 1979, Sen 1982, Reaz 1995). This state oriented literature alleges that liberal, structuralist functionalist and Marxist frameworks are inadequate for state studies because they tend to reduce politics to societal variables. According to this view, such frameworks lead to an excessive

focus on social determinants -- class forces, cultural orientation, interest group pressure, levels of economic development -- while detracting attention from the significant role of the state in controlling, molding and even creating social structures and processes. These neo-institutionalist scholars argue for moving away from a society centered frame of reference towards a state oriented world view emphasizing the institutional role of the state in society. This neo-Weberian view of the state helps focus attention on those elements of the state -- coercion, institutional identity and leadership authority -- that enable political actors to play a significant role in society.

The neo-institutionalist approach has gained some popularity in the Southern countries. Many scholars in articulating the theory of state for the South have used the neo-institutionalist approach (Amsden 1989, Stepan 1978, Kohli 1987, Sen 1982). They have argued that the experience of the Newly Industrialized Countries (NICs) and the role of "developmental state" in these countries demonstrate the importance of this approach in analyzing the "third world" state. This dissertation argues instead that the strong Bangladeshi state has been repressive and coercive rather than "developmental". More importantly, the neo-institutionalist approach downplays the important interconnections of state and society and largely neglects the role of social forces, the

focus of this thesis.

In response to the continuing negative trends and failures of formal political institutions (state, political parties) to initiate positive development and popular participation, attention increasingly began to be focussed on organizations and activities outside the purview of both the government and political parties, for example, new social movements, non-governmental organizations, voluntary agencies, action groups and grassroots groups. This emphasis on the role of other actors reflected a widespread rejection of the role traditionally assigned to the state in theories of economic and political development (also the statism of orthodox Marxists).

The decade of the eighties witnessed a movement towards "de-centering the state". The literature on civil society (Keane 1988, Pateman 1988, Maier 1987, Cohen and Arato 1992) draws attention away from the state. These theorists point out that struggles waged in civil society are as critical to social transformation as struggles directed at the state. Civil society is seen as the opposite of despotism, a space in which social groups could exist and move -- something which exemplified and would ensure softer, more tolerable conditions of existence. This perspective generated a vision of civil society as a far more complex mosaic of different interest groups than class and dependency analysis had pointed out. At

the same time they are less revolutionary than the Marxist analyses of the 1960s and 1970s. Rather than emphasize the takeover of the state, they stress the need to make the state more transparent, open to public scrutiny and more responsive to societal concerns.

It needs to be mentioned here that neo-liberals are also increasingly using the discourse of "civil society", "good governance", globalization and democratization to project an anti-statist image. In the post cold war era, statist aid strategies are under attack. Neo-liberal reforms have surfaced in the form of withdrawal of support for state agencies and greater support for actors in civil society. NGOs are seen in the neo-liberal tradition as the most important actors in strengthening civil society and building more democratic societies. William Graf observes,

The exigencies of the era of structural adjustment and conditionalities are thought to require a (liberal) democratic facade to compensate for the de-legitimizing effects of shrinking state services and intra-societal polarization (Graf 1995:146).

The neo-liberal prescription for democratization and anti-statism remains in conflict with its encouragement of repression in southern states that enforce IMF/World Bank conditionalities and GATT trade regulations at the expense of the poor. Also, the neo-liberal insistence on free trade ensures the need for strong state authority. To opt for an export-oriented strategy by definition means down-playing

domestic concerns and popular needs (Graf 1995:151).

This neo-liberal democratization project and its perception of civil society must be distinguished from the post-modern advocacy of new social movements for greater emancipation and participation at the grassroots. The literature on new social movements, popular uprisings and participatory action research as well as on the indigenous voice, discusses that form of democratization. Laura Macdonald has rightly pointed out that the apparent congruence in the discourse of civil society in fact hides very different political agendas and very different approaches to the NGOs. She observes,

the language being used by a wide range of donors and international organizations -- people's participation, democracy, partnership, civil society -- is also the language used by many popular movements and NGOs in the South which are seeking radical changes in the economic and political systems in their countries (Macdonald 1994:2).

The social movements and NGOs discussed in Chapter Five seek such radical transformations in society as opposed to neo-liberal reforms.

In post-modern perceptions, the new social movements in the North as well as in the South are seen as collective attempts within civil society to create new identities and to thwart the hegemonic attempts of the mainstream ideology to colonize inner life spaces. The new line adopted is that "new social movements are associations within the subaltern classes

where (embryonic) processes take place concerning the creation of new, non-commoditive values and new lines of horizontal communication" (Evers 1985). In short, this post-modern view calls for the creation of a new identity, an identity contrary to the universality of the modernity projects, with its own localized goals of emancipation, which does not lead to a bid for political power, but is based in local movements with multiple identities located in civil society, stressing new ways of social communication (solidarity and mutual understanding) and a new harmonic relationship with nature (Evers 1985, Friedmann 1989, Fuentes and Frank 1989). These movements not only represent a profound rejection of existing power structures but call for more fundamental changes in the organization of society. Critics have pointed out that new social movements in the South are not by any means post-modern (Habermas 1990) and that categorizing the creation of new values, new life styles, new ways of communication and new ways of collective action as post-modern denies the history of the movements and misinterprets what they are all about (Schurman 1993:19). In spite of this, the post-modern inspired interpretation of the new social movements is increasingly being adopted by scholars in the South (Wignaraja 1993, Kothari 1993, Amin 1993).

I think these post-modern perceptions are important and innovative and do highlight many of the deficiencies and

gender and class limitations of the centralized state theories. By giving voice to hitherto marginalized groups -- women, peasants, landless, environmental groups -- they contribute in important ways to the assertion of identity, the search for alternative means of self-realization and the possibility of a multiplicity of localized resistances and counter offensives to hegemonic power. As such, they may hold the key to a future strategy transforming domestic power in such a way as to overcome the problem of dysfunctional elite rule in Southern states like Bangladesh. Such an approach aims not at taking state power and using it to transform the economy and society, it aspires instead to incite a broad popular movement that will somehow transform the country from the "bottom up". It is worth stressing that the actual transformative potential of new social movements and popular struggles may be of incalculable importance in "restructuring" the internal power relationships in Southern states. I have used the insights of this perception to examine and explore the varied responses of people in civil society to the multifaceted crises in their lives and how such responses are catalytic in transforming prevailing state structures and questioning the dominant development model. In my definition, civil society constitutes the sphere of social, economic, cultural and political activities resisting the incursions of the state. It is not, however, the exclusive space of

marginalized classes. It may be subject to encroachment by the ruling classes, which are always bent on maximizing their own supremacy. Although most of the approaches to state and civil society have focussed on the Western capitalist societies, attempts have been made to apply different approaches to the analysis of state and civil society in the Southern countries, including Bangladesh.

STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN BANGLADESH

The discussion of the political economy in Bangladesh has predominantly reflected upon the nature of class relations in society and the role of the state in the development of such class relations. There is very little about gender in the context of state and civil society in Bangladesh and the interconnections between class and gender relations in the country. Neither is there much about environmental concerns and how environmental issues are intertwined with class and gender in the context of rural Bangladesh and how the state perceives such interconnections.

A number of scholars have used Marxist tools to analyze state and civil society in Bangladesh. In their analyses, class relations and the coercive powers of capitalism are central.¹ The state reflects the structural and ideological power of dominant groups in society where there are present multiple forms of exploitation and oppression (Rahman 1986, Jahangir 1979, 1982, 1986, Sobhan 1981, 1982). These scholars

have identified the role of state in enhancing differentiation and polarization in rural society in Bangladesh. Most of these analyses focus on the rural social structure in the country. Their analysis contrasts with the neo-institutionalists whose understanding of the state overlooks the important interconnections of state and society and neglects the role of the social forces. Also, in contrast to liberal views in which state and civil society relations are depoliticized and which have influenced the policies of successive governments and international financial donors in Bangladesh, Marxist scholars at least make possible the posing of the issue of the representation of dominant social forces within the state. These theorists take us further than liberal and neo-institutional theorists in exploring the links between class on the one hand and state and civil society on the other. These links are of critical significance in understanding the political economy of the country. Although these theorists have provided important insights in analyzing the internal dynamics of state and civil society relations in Bangladesh, they privilege class categories, while the examination of the structures of gender relations in society and their interaction with class dimensions are often neglected. The important interconnections of environmental issues and development concerns in the country and their differential class/gender impact have also not figured adequately in their

analysis. The tendency has been to encapsulate the issue of politics in the category of class, undermining all the dimensions beyond that.

The approach adopted in this dissertation gives a central place to the analysis of the interrelationship of the issues of class, gender and the environment and their interactions with civil society and the state. By integrating the discussions of gender, class and the environment, it is possible to break down the isolated focus on "class" or "gender" or "environment" as separate from mainstream debates of the political economy of Bangladesh. This means looking at connections across different issue areas --how gender, class and environmental concerns are intertwined and how they relate to each other. Also, a focus on the different dimensions of social conflict and their interrelationships provides a more comprehensive framework for analyzing state and civil society relations in Bangladesh than is possible with an approach limited to class analysis.

It is argued here that state and civil society in Bangladesh are interacting structures composed of varying interests which may converge or diverge, in the latter case providing space for the building up of countervailing resistance. The state is firmly grounded in society and necessarily reflects society's class relationships. Politics in any class society is neither benign nor harmonious but

constitutes a terrain of struggle, exploitation and resistance. The forms of struggle, the mechanisms of exploitation and the types of resistance do not necessarily involve collective class action, they can be individualized and indirect or encompass other social categories such as ethnicity or gender or other social issues such as the environment. A new breed of actors in civil society is gradually emerging in Bangladesh, interested not in state power, but rather in creating a free space that is not dominated by the state. The wide variety of responses in civil society to the multifaceted crises and the collective efforts to bring about social change represent a form of countervailing power, and provide a critique of the dominant development framework based largely on mainstream economics which has guided major interventions into the lives of people in the name of development. It provides a number of lessons for rethinking past approaches to development.

One of the most important neo-Marxist scholars to work on Bangladesh, Hamza Alavi (1973), has developed the thesis of the "overdeveloped" post-colonial state. His article "The State in Post-Colonial Societies : Pakistan and Bangladesh" is one of the first theoretical approaches to an analysis of social formation² in the "third world". Many subsequent analyses of the Bangladesh state have drawn on Alavi to theorize the nature of the state (Hossain 1991, Jahangir 1979,

1982, Westergaard 1985). The focus of Alavi's analysis is on the special role of the military bureaucratic oligarchy, which according to him, is a common characteristic of post colonial societies. Alavi argues,

the colonial state is ...equipped with a powerful bureaucratic military apparatus and with governmental mechanisms that enable it, through routine operations to subordinate the native social classes. The post-colonial society inherits that overdeveloped state apparatus and its institutionalized practices through which the operations of the indigenous social classes are regulated and controlled (Alavi 1973:147).

Alavi points out that the role of the bureaucratic military oligarchy in post colonial societies is determined within the matrix of a class society. His argument is that in the colonial period, the bureaucratic military state apparatus was "overdeveloped" because it had to exercise dominion over the native social classes. In the post colonial period too, Alavi argues, the state has remained autonomous because no single class has succeeded in establishing its rule over the "overdeveloped" state. In this view, the inherited state apparatus is larger, its coercive and administrative powers weightier or more ramified, and in the post-colonial society the state acquires a relatively autonomous role vis a vis the social classes (Alavi 1973).

As Alavi states,

the state in the post-colonial society, is not the instrument of a single class. It is relatively autonomous and it mediates the competing interests of the three propertied classes -- the metropolitan bourgeoisie, the

indigenous bourgeoisie and the landed classes -- while at the same time acting on behalf of all of them in order to preserve the social order in which their interests are embedded, namely, the institution of private property and the capitalist mode as the dominant mode of production (Alavi 1973:148).

Although Alavi's work with reference to the Bangladesh experience illuminates the historical basis of the colonial situation it remains theoretically inadequate in explaining the many important aspects of the nature of state and civil society in the country.³ Alavi's "overdeveloped" thesis provides a linear understanding of history in which the post-colonial state remains merely an extension of the colonial regime. In this understanding, the significance of the struggles of the internal social classes in the post-colonial state is neglected. From within the Marxist framework, Borhanuddin Khan Jahangir points out that "Alavi's notion of convergence of interest of the three competing propertied classes in post-colonial Bangladesh is problematic as it does not address the imbalances between the three classes" (Jahangir 1986:51). Also from a Marxist point of view, Kristen Westergaard points out that "although Alavi's focus on the superstructure does have some explanatory value, it does not sufficiently explain the inherent dynamic of the social formations in Bangladesh" (Westergaard 1985:8). However, what is more important for this thesis is that Alavi's "overdeveloped" thesis also does not provide tools for

analyzing gender concerns or environmental concerns vis a vis class or state and how the interrelationship of class, gender and environmental issues impact on state and civil society relations.

From a Weberian perspective, Anupam Sen (1982) is critical of Alavi's theory of the state for his failure to take pre-colonial roots into consideration. Sen observes,

The social classes in most post colonial Third World societies have failed to establish their hegemony over the state not because the state apparatus was overdeveloped by the colonial rulers, as Alavi argues, but because the state was stronger than the social classes long before these societies were colonized ... The colonial state apparatus, at least in the case of India (as well as Pakistan and Bangladesh), evolved from the patriarchal Moghul state which the colonizing power inherited. The shortcomings in Alavi's study stem from his failure to analyze historically the social formation of the Indian subcontinent, which still bears its pre-colonial roots and to relate these changing societies to the state (Sen 1982:12).

The central theme of Sen's argument is that the state enjoys "independence" or "autonomy" from class control. Sen's understanding of the state from a neo-institutionalist point of view, overlooks the important interactions of state and society and neglects the role of social forces. Sen's argument has important similarities to Ali Reaz, who has also analyzed the Bangladesh state from a neo-institutionalist perspective.⁴ Reaz's (1995) concept of the state implicitly incorporates three aspects : apparatus, power, and authority, which, in contrast to Marxist approaches, downplay the role of social

forces or class struggle in society.

From a neo-Marxist position, Rehman Sobhan (1981, 1982, 1983, 1990) highlights the notion of the state as an instrument of the indigenous bourgeoisie. Sobhan has shown in many of his books how development aid to Bangladesh has contributed to building up a wealthy class. He also pointed to the close kinship relationship which exists between bourgeois class and top politicians, high level bureaucrats and the military. Sobhan describes in considerable detail the dimensions of Bangladesh's external dependence and the general implications of such overwhelming dependence on others.

In his book Public Enterprise and the Nature of the State : The Case of South Asia, Sobhan observes that in countries where the colonial powers dominated the productive and distributive sectors and even the machinery of the state, the state remained socially underdeveloped without a dominant class force to fill the vacuum created by the departing colonial power. According to him,

in such a situation a comprador bourgeoisie⁵ may gradually emerge as an appendage to the colonial : e, serving as subordinate functionaries in the administration and economic enterprises owned by foreign capital or in the service sector which grows up to meet the needs of the colonial power (Sobhan 1983:4).

Sobhan argues that the historical legacy of external political domination up to 1971⁶ over the areas that now constitute Bangladesh, meant that the indigenous bourgeoisie

remained underdeveloped (Sobhan 1981). The underdeveloped character of the Bangladesh bourgeoisie has made them dependent on state patronage and external linkages for their development as a class. In his view, the growth of a domestic bourgeoisie from the outset of liberation, thus came to be tied up with access to external resources. For the aspirant private bourgeoisie who enjoyed limited control over productive assets, it meant that their only vehicle for linkage with the world system was through the role of an intermediary. In Sobhan's words,

The volume and distribution of earnings from performing the role of intermediary depend critically on the volume of external assistance coming into Bangladesh and on access to state patronage. The higher the inflow of external assistance the more profits accrue to this class. External resource inflows directly and indirectly further the growth and prosperity of this class of intermediaries. The aspirant bourgeoisie has thus come to acquire a material stake in an aid-dependent regime. Any trend towards abridging external dependence at least in the short run is likely to be directly inimical to the interests of these intermediaries (Sobhan 1981:56).

Implicit in Sobhan's argument is the view that aid is the chief means by which aid agencies and the major powers seek to maintain and perpetuate the world capitalist system. Sobhan summarizes his judgement of aid projects and development strategies as follows: "the donor's pressure to direct aid projects to the poor thus generates a drama of deception, where both donor and recipient continue to fabricate projects ostensibly designed to serve the poor but which in practice

largely perpetuate the wealth of the elite" (Sobhan 1982:164). Sobhan argues that in spite of donors' stated objective of providing aid for alleviation of poverty, "aid serves ulterior ends including those of export promotion and political stabilization" (Sobhan 1990:180). According to him, the more aid a donor gives, the more explicitly are its policy choices expressed. Economic management and development administration happen to be areas where the donors have time and again made their views explicit (Sobhan 1992:185). As well, in the competition between the superpowers during the cold war era, aid money was used for geo-political purposes to win friends among state elites and to support political stability. This had the effect of making states and elites stronger as opposed to other actors in civil society. In the post cold war era, aid agencies have changed their strategy by down-playing the role of the state and giving greater support to actors in civil society.

In his view, the dependence on aid flows is not, however, restricted to the growth aspirations of a domestic capitalist class. A growing state bourgeoisie both within the permanent bureaucracy as well as the executives of the state enterprises have also become heavily dependent on the inflows of external assistance to further their sectional interests. According to Sobhan, part of this compulsion originates in the power and patronage which derives from initiating and executing large

aid financed development projects. Both in terms of intra-bureaucratic power and within the polity, control over such projects becomes a major resource for those contending for state power (Sobhan 1982:51).

Sobhan argues that the decisive representation of international capital within the nation state occurs through the comprador bourgeoisie and its access to state power. He views international capital as a social force which commands some part or all of the national bourgeoisie and turns it against the interest of the masses. This precludes any identification of contradictions generated within the nation state associated with the internationalization of capital. Sobhan's analysis provides only a limited understanding of the state since it postulates a fusion of the state with a social class (the indigenous bourgeoisie), the latter existing independently of any relationship -- conflictual or harmonious -- with the other social classes in the constitution of the state. Sobhan's portrayal of the bourgeois state does not address the situation of other socially relevant classes, whose existence makes the indigenous bourgeoisie a class in the first place. His analysis reduces the state to an instrument of the indigenous bourgeoisie. His overemphasis on aid-dependence underplays the nature of internal class conflict and its impact on the state. Sobhan's analysis also does not address gender or the environment in the context of

state or class.

Another group of scholars, also drawing on neo-Marxist argument, have focused explicitly on the nature of internal class conflicts and their impact on the state. Their interpretation of the nature of state and civil society in Bangladesh, which gained prominence during the seventies and early eighties, stressed the role of the state in promoting peasant differentiation, polarization and class conflict in society (Rahman 1986, Jahangir 1979, 1982, 1986, 1990, Hossain 1991, Arn 1984, Bertocci 1970, 1972, Alamgir 1976, 1978, Hartman and Boyce 1983, Areans and Beurden 1977, Blair 1973, Chowdhury 1989). Development programs of the state promoted by international aid agencies were largely viewed in this approach as generating greater material disparity and intensifying the differentiation and polarization of rural peasant society. Although there are important differences and varied ideological positions within this dominant view, a broad consensus may be noted in identifying common underlying themes. There is a general consensus in the literature on the class character of rural society in Bangladesh and the way the "rural power structure" operates to channel the benefits of development to the "rich". The authors' arguments clearly manifest that the rural power structure is controlled by landed elites. This view identified vast disparities of income and influence in rural society in Bangladesh. The wealthier

sections of the peasantry came to be referred to as belonging to a "class", be it "landlord" or "rich peasant" or "surplus farmer", in view of the control they exercised over land and economic activities. In this view, this class dominated the traditional social, political and religious institutions in the rural areas through the "rural" power structure. This class of rich peasants acquired the capability to monopolize the development resources which were channeled for rural areas. As a result, whatever efforts the state made to stimulate development (sometimes under the guise of "poverty oriented" rhetoric) simply resulted in making the "rich richer" and the "poor poorer". The rural rich were viewed as collaborators with the state in bringing into being a process of capitalist agrarian change directly causing the immiseration of the poor.'

One of the earlier studies (Blair 1973) highlights the importance of the major shift in perception of the rural class structure, which was in direct contrast to the assumptions commonly prevalent during the 1960s of a homogenous and classless society. Harry Blair's study identifies a 'class of kulak farmers' and demonstrates that this class derives considerable benefits from the various institutional forms of development input. In his study, information was gathered from studies of the Comilla cooperative, the Thana Irrigation Program, the Integrated Rural Development Program, Rural Works Program and

the Basic Democracies Program. Blair demonstrates how the dominating rural class gains effective control over all these structures. He observes,

there is an extensive class of 'kulak' farmers, perhaps best called 'surplus' farmers, in the range of say 3 to 5 acres who work their own land with the help of family and perhaps hired labor and are generally opportunity maximizers (Blair 1973:11).

This identification of a distinctive class character of the rural society accompanied by the argument that the pattern of access to rural development inputs were skewed in favor of the better off class was strongly held and widely disseminated during the 1970s and argued and substantiated in a variety of ways.

Two major studies (Rahman 1986, and Jahangir 1979) have strongly argued that the process of differentiation and polarization is being accelerated by rural development efforts of the state. Atiur Rahman (1986) has analyzed the role of the state and the emergence of an entrepreneurial, capitalist class in rural Bangladesh. In his view, the state has a specific role to play and the logic of state intervention in development is to ensure that capitalism is promoted. The ruling classes in Bangladesh, he argues, are dependent on the expansion and reproduction of the capitalist mode of production. Rahman observes

our field experience does not support the hypothesis that the state is neutral, as is often asserted. As we have seen ... the structural effects of state intervention

with respect to the peasantry in Bangladesh have only facilitated the continuation and consolidation of the domination of the poor by the rich. Indeed the state has created new classes dependent on it for access to all kinds of subsidized inputs and 'developmental' allocations. The ruling class draws its main support from these classes for its survival. So on the whole we may argue that state intervention has actually helped enhance the accumulative power of the rich peasantry and the bureaucrats and extended their areas of exploitation. One can therefore conclude that the state in Bangladesh is negotiating the subsumption of labor to capital and in doing so, is actually stimulating increased social differentiation within rural households (Rahman 1986:242).

He uses two village case studies to substantiate his central thesis of peasant differentiation and polarization in rural society in Bangladesh on the basis of landholding patterns between 1951 and 1981.

While the bottom 60% of the households of village 1 owned 24.35% of total land in 1951, their share has fallen to only 11% by 1981.... similarly in village 2, the bottom 60% of the households owned 24.53% of the land in 1951 and the share has fallen to only 10.90% in 1981.... At the other end of the spectrum, the top 10% of the household have been gaining land consistently and the pace of the enlargement of their holding has been greater in the 1970s in both villages. In village 1, while the 10% of the households owned 34.81% of the total land in 1951, the share increased to 47.85% in 1981. In village 2, the change has been even more spectacular. The top 10% owned 29.69% of the total land in 1951 and their share has risen to 53.83% in 1981 (Rahman 1986:110).

Rahman has suggested a process of polarization in society in which the rich improve their economic position and landownership while the position of the poor degenerates, with a resulting widening of the gap between rich and poor.

Jahangir also stressed the role of the state in promoting

peasant differentiation, polarization and class conflict in rural society. In analyzing the nature of state and civil society in Bangladesh from a neo-Marxist approach, he pointed out that a class of petty bourgeois elements assumed formal political power in the post liberation period in 1971. According to him the national liberation movement of Bangladesh was characterized by an underdeveloped working class and a nascent bourgeoisie: "The strata that comes to the fore in such a juncture is the petty bourgeoisie and in turn, it is supported by broad masses, semi-proletarian elements, peasants and at times by certain sections of the emerging bourgeoisie" (Jahangir 1986:44).

Jahangir argues that the petty bourgeois monopolizes the major institutions of the state. On one plane, they take up the role of national arbiters between contending factions and on another plane they act as a sort of emissary between national interests and the development of national capital (Jahangir 1986:49). In his view, the use of the state, for example through special financial arrangements, training programs and manipulation of licenses, strengthens the bureaucratic process around the apparatus of the state. This is a sort of class interest distinct from, and antagonistic to, the interests of the mass of the people. He states,

Two features need to be stressed during the non-capitalist era in relation to the state a) underdeveloped major classes and b) state as an underdeveloped

institution. These two features make the state seem to be an 'independent' and autonomous institution. Since the state is not the instrument of class domination over the other classes, control of the state becomes susceptible to narrow shifts in alliances among the ruling petty bourgeois elements. The subsequent coups and counter coups point to the shifts of power and position among the petty bourgeois elements. As the petty bourgeois is not dependent on the nascent bourgeois or the weak working class it tends to rely heavily on the bureaucratic military state apparatus. The leadership among the petty bourgeoisie act as if the state is neutral, as if they are the arbiters between the working class and the nascent bourgeoisie and also between the various elements of the petty bourgeoisie. Only they represent the national interests and therefore one beyond all classes (Jahangir 1986:47).

Jahangir argues that by assuming the role of mediation between conflicting forces they cancel out class struggle in society. Referring to the Awami League regime (1971-1975) which assumed power after the liberation war, he states that

the petty bourgeoisie during Sheikh Mujib's era (1971-1975) produced its own ideology : Mujibbad (Mujibism) and gave it a supra class character at the cost of suppressing class analysis and diffusing internal class struggles. There was a broad alliance of progressive forces under the leadership of the petty bourgeoisie which reflected a political compromise. In such a compromise the subordinate classes and their organizations are subsumed under the pressures of the petty bourgeoisie (Jahangir 1986:45).

In analyzing the regime of President Ershad (1982-1990) who came to power through a military coup, he points out that class domination was established in the fundamentals of society : property, religious ideology, construction of values, political participation, kinship networks and employment practices. He observes,

The regime had little or no structures of public accountability, a lacuna which reinforces internally the monopoly position of the bureaucrats and military within the regime. The maintenance of such a monopoly depends on the flow of external aid which emphasize privatization policies and target group approaches. Privatization policies or target group approaches were attempted through local government institutions which are enmeshed within national and local patron/client networks and which ensure the maximization of the needs of the locally dominant political and economic class that furnishes local elites (Jahangir 1989:149).

From a similar vision, two other studies have pointed out that policies aimed at the rural poor are seriously compromised in order to serve the interest of rural elites. In analyzing the relationship between state and peasantry in Bangladesh, Ann-Lisbert Arn argues that state policies which aim to increase productivity serve to strengthen the rural elite who form an "impenetrable barrier" to any policy aimed at the needs of the rural poor: "This provokes little concern as the government continues to rely on the political support of this rural elite" (Arn 1984:14). Her survey of the four villages in Noakhali in Bangladesh reveals a picture of growing landlessness, declining real wages and increasing poverty.

Kazi T. Hossain, in identifying some major factors responsible for growing landlessness in rural Bangladesh, also argues that pauperization of marginal and small farmers has turned out to be a dominant characteristic in rural Bangladesh. The political leadership of successive Bangladesh

governments provided institutional credit, input subsidies and irrigation facilities for rural areas which largely benefitted the rural rich. The leadership in return received their loyalty and political support. On the other hand, the rural poor hardly had access to such facilities offered by the governmental and other institutional agencies because the landed elites monopolized control over these institutional facilities (Hossain 1991:32).

Although as seen above, an overall consensus may be identified about differentiation and polarization in rural society in Bangladesh and the role of the state in enhancing such disparities, there are two schools of thought regarding the crystallization of class-based politics in Bangladesh. One group of scholars argues that economic differentiation and polarization give shape to political confrontation between poor peasants and the rural rich and intensifies class struggle and conflict (Jahangir 1979, 1986, Rahman 1986, Hossain 1991, Arn 1984). As Jahangir notes,

whereas the rural rich are structurally aligned with the bureaucracy and the dominant political parties, the poor peasants organized by the Left wing operate mainly in the local area. The latter attempts to challenge the existing national power structure from a class position, which, because of increasing economic differentiation and polarization is becoming more clearly defined and they form a local political base. In this way, the process of differentiation expands the potential area of tension and dissatisfaction and gives shape to the forms and intensity of political confrontation at both village and national levels (Jahangir 1979:291).

Another group of scholars has argued that patron-client (vertical) relationships which extend throughout the fabric of Bangladesh society have hindered the crystallization of politics along class lines or class-based horizontal alliances (Jansen 1987, 1991, Khan 1989, Westergaard 1985, Siddique 1985, Wood 1994, Blair 1994). Geoffrey Wood in his book Bangladesh : Whose Ideas? Whose Interests?, writes of a fragmentation of potential class solidarity on horizontal lines through incorporation into vertically aligned factional groups led by leaders of one's lineage. He observes,

The rural political economy consisted of class relations expressed through patron-client structured hierarchies, with poor landowners, sharecropping tenants and landless laborers constituting a class of clients tied individually to patrons who might be landlords, moneylenders or employers, usually in combination (Wood 1994:486).

Similarly, Shakeeb Adnan Khan notes "there are few signs of class struggle or conflict in contemporary Bangladesh, despite increasing pauperization and landlessness. Left parties or underground organizations advocating armed struggle have totally failed to mobilize the poor and landless along the rural class lines" (Khan 1989:54). In his book, The State and Village Society : The Political Economy of Agricultural Development in Bangladesh, he has pointed out that long chains of patron-clientelism extend throughout the fabric of Bangladesh society from its political center to the smallest village unit. Khan argues that although the dominant rural

groups initially attempted to impose traditional patterns of control in order to extract wealth, in the long term they have not been able to use their power to achieve a monopoly of access to the benefits from cooperatives. There are pressures against the dominant rural groups using the control of these institutions purely for their own "class" benefit. According to him, patron-client relations are needed by the dominant rural groups as a practical means of resolving their personal security problems since the state does not have the capacity to provide a reasonable degree of security of life and private property in the rural areas. "Clients are needed for various practical tasks to provide a measure of protection to the patron" (Khan 1989:91). Thus he concludes

the social and political conditions of the villages are far from conducive to the formation of an entrepreneurial class capable of concentrating on its own economic advancement through accumulation. Rather the social and political forces affecting the villages have the effect of minimizing and diffusing rather than exacerbating class contradictions and conflict (Khan 1989:91).

Another scholar, Kamal Siddique, in his book Rural Poverty in Bangladesh, also discusses the polarization process in rural areas which continues unabated and in which rich peasants are the beneficiaries of the prevailing power structure. However, he argues that peasant power remains ineffective as both governmental organizations and non-governmental organizations have created divisions within the peasantry based on beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of

target group efforts which inhibit the development of class unity amongst the poor peasants and hinders peasant struggles based on structural issues, such as land reform (Siddique 1985).

Westergaard is of the view that vertical links between richer and poorer households predominate in most parts of rural Bangladesh. In her study of state and rural society in Bangladesh, she similarly notes that although the economic policy pursued by the various governments in Bangladesh have resulted in the increasing pauperization of broader and broader sections of the population, politics has not crystallized along class lines. She observes

Neither this pauperization nor the parallel process of social polarization has, so far significantly developed class consciousness among the poor. The political culture continues to be characterized by structural fragmentation, fomenting atomization of individual economic interests. Even poor people try to maximize their economic goals by attaching themselves to persons who are powerful and prestigious (Westergaard 1985:165).

Eirik G. Jansen in his study on patron-client relationships in rural Bangladesh notes that the social organizations of the rural areas are dominated by patron-client relations. "Many well to do peasants are patrons in some relations and clients in other (i.e. in relation to local politicians, government officers, rich landlords)" (Jansen 1987:49). He argues that patron-client relations persist because none of the traditional rural institutions or

organizations can provide a strong basis for articulation of class interest. Even if the poor want to articulate their interests and discontent against the rich they fear sanctions they may face. According to him, patron-client relations can work against development of class consciousness and class based organizations, and they hinder confrontations between the rich and the poor.

Most of the authors discussed above do not focus explicitly on the nature of civil society in Bangladesh. However, it becomes clear from their analysis that in the last two decades, there were three major actors at the decision making level in Bangladesh -- the bureaucracy, the military and the political leadership. The bureaucracy and the military have dominated the political scene most of the time, when repressive state policies suppressed civil society actors and excluded the majority of the population from political participation. Much less frequently (as under the current democratic regime) the bureaucracy and the politicians have been at the top. The rural elites have supported whichever alliance has been in power at a given time in order to maintain their position of control in rural areas and to act as patrons in the patron-client linkages that characterized the rural sector in Bangladesh. Both state repression and clientalism explain the weakness of civil society in Bangladesh, where popular interests have not been represented.

Also, the deep schism between haves and have nots meant that civil society remained subordinated and underdeveloped.

However, in the wake of democratization in the nineties, significant changes have taken place in the arena of civil society which has become much more visible and politicized. Human rights organizations have developed systems of information gathering and have nurtured ties to the media in order to get their message out to the public. The print media have blossomed in terms of what they can and do print. The range of topics has broadened significantly and the willingness to criticize the government has deepened considerably.

Umbrella NGOs (ADAB, CEN, VHSS) acting as intermediaries between the NGO community and the Government of Bangladesh have now become an integral part of the developmental landscape in Bangladesh, largely to mitigate and channel tensions between the two sides. They have been active in representing their members' interests to the Government of Bangladesh. Some of the advocacy NGOs encourage and mobilize their group members to demand accountability of the state in providing services and guarantees (for example, Proshika, Nijera Kori, UBINIG, GSS, BRAC). As we will see below, several NGOs combined "bottom up" citizen concern and mobilized public opinion on the Flood Action Plan (FAP) in the early nineties which greatly widened the public debate on the environmental

and social impact of the Plan and on people's participation in flood control efforts. Similarly, the advocacy NGOs played an important part in mobilizing civil society responses on such other issues as shrimp cultivation, coercive family planning measures and harmful social forestry practices, as discussed in Chapters Four and Five.

Many research oriented NGOs, like the Center for Policy Dialogue, Nari Pokkho, Women for Women and the Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP) have held seminars and workshops on major public issues which have had an impact in making people conscious and providing a forum for expressing and articulating their views on issues which directly affect their lives. Most importantly, there is a proliferation of horizontal alliances in the form of social movements, not only along class lines but among other social categories and issue areas. These contain radical potential for structural transformations in civil society in coming years.

Although a broad consensus may be identified among the different ideological positions discussed above about differentiation and polarization in civil society in Bangladesh and the role of the state in enhancing such disparities, there are differences in perception about the nature of responses in civil society. One group of scholars has focused on patron-client relations and downplay class consciousness and the potential of horizontal linkages across

classes in transforming society. They only talk about vertical linkages which do not have the potential for radical changes (Khan 1989, Westergaard 1985, Blair 1994, Wood 1994). For this group of scholars, civil society is composed of harmonious spheres of free associations. Although they call for representation of popular interests in the state, they are incapable of addressing the inherent power relations which structure civil society. In their approach, inadequate consideration is given to structural transformation of the prevailing order.

In contrast, the other group has focused on class-based alliances in society and how such horizontal linkages have the potential for structural transformation (Jahangir 1979, 1986, Rahman 1986, Hossain 1991, Arn 1984). For this group, who draw on Gramscian approaches, there exist structural sources of inequality in civil society. Instead of viewing the primary contradiction as lying between state and civil society, their approach permits an analysis of contradiction and conflict within civil society, which is indispensable in understanding the nature of civil society and its relations with the state.

Those theorists who speak of patron-client relations in rural Bangladesh do not talk about structural transformation in the relations between the rich and the poor. Their analysis do not demonstrate the awareness of the rural poor about their

exploited condition or of the capacity to act on it. In such analyses, the focus remains solely on patronage relationship. I think that this vision is limited in that the issue of class consciousness and the ability to act on it is either ignored or underestimated. However, Jansen indicates a growing tendency towards the breakup of patron-client relations and the emergence of a more politicized civil society in rural Bangladesh. I agree with Jansen that "there is increasing evidence in the rural areas that landless people are beginning to organize themselves in horizontal class based relationships in order to strengthen their bargaining position" (Jansen 1991:48).

However, a focus only on class does not express the complexity of the experience. The key to understanding social and economic inequalities is to grasp the relations through which they are reproduced, to look at gender and environmental concerns and how they interact with class. An isolated focus on economic categories in conceptualizing class does not capture the relational quality of wealth and poverty that makes class a vital concept in the study of social inequality in Bangladesh. It only highlights the differentiation and polarization in society and how the rich become richer and poor poorer, but it does not look at the interconnections or interactive nature of class and gender structures in society. It also does not look at how gender relations tend to

reproduce class positions nor how environmental concerns are intertwined with gender and class concerns.

Civil society is seen in both orthodox Marxist approach and in liberal thinking as a space predominated by men operating in the public sphere, while women are relegated to the private sphere of the household. Laura Macdonald rightly points out that "such approaches to civil society tend to reinforce the economic and political differentials between men and women as they do not address the power dynamics within the household" (Macdonald 1994:13). In a paper Supporting Civil Society? NGOs and the Politics of Intervention, presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association in New York, she deconstructs the myth that civil society is gender neutral. She observes,

In the last couple of decades, women throughout the South have increasingly demanded their right to participate in social movements and they make up the majority of many such movements. Still, their ability to participate in and lead such movements is constrained by women's unequal access to economic resources and education, their socially-constrained lack of confidence and feelings of self worth, lack of control over fertility, and simply lack of time (Macdonald 1994:14).

She further observes that although NGOs in many "third world" countries have begun to implement development projects aimed just at women, NGO performance has seemingly not been much better in this respect than that of state development agencies. According to her, "by failing to directly address

the sources of social and political imbalances between the genders, these isolated economic projects tend to reinforce rather than undermine women's unequal access to the spheres of civil society" (Macdonald 1994:14)

Unlike classical theorists, post-Marxists include relations within the family as part of civil society. As Carole Pateman states

Political theorists argue about the individual and take it for granted that their subject matter concerns the public world without investigating the way in which the 'individual,' 'civil society' and the 'public' have been constituted as patriarchal categories in opposition to womanly nature and the 'private sphere' (Pateman 1988:101).

Sarah White rightly argues that "women's" issues cannot be considered apart from the general context of poverty and social inequality. "Abstraction of 'women' from the wider context significantly obscures the analysis of social inequality" (White 1992:12). In her book Arguing with the Crocodile : Class and Gender in Bangladesh, White focuses on the inter-relations of class and gender inequality in rural Bangladesh. Throughout the study, the inter-relationship between class and gender relations is analyzed. The author advances a model of interlocked triangles based not only on strictly economic but also wider social relationships. Here she shows how in practice cluster relations exist between households and these may involve cross-gender, cross-class interactions. She also shows how cluster relationships are

fraught with contradictions as they are at the same time mutually advantageous and deeply unequal. Thus rich women's potential as intermediaries can give them considerable power in patronage towards poorer men and women. Poor women, on the other hand, are oppressed not only by class but also by gender and it is the interaction of these two forms of inequality that is so disastrous for them (White 1992:147). So, it is apparent from White's analysis that there is a specificity of women's oppression, beyond and in addition to that stemming from class, ethnicity, race and caste.

Mead Cain, Syeda Rokeya Khanam and Shamsun Nahar in their study have found that in rural Bangladesh, patriarchy⁸ interacts with economic class to produce a rigid division of labor by sex, a highly segregated labor market and a system of stratification that places women at risk of abrupt declines in economic status independent of the processes of class differentiation. According to them,

rural Bangladesh is a class society, hierarchically organized primarily on the basis of ownership and control of arable land. The distribution of social power and income among households is closely related to the distribution and control of land. There is another system of stratification in Bangladesh, however, that operates not at the household levels but between males and females within households. Bangladesh is a patriarchal society in addition to being a class society. As a consequence two distinct processes of economic differentiation occur in the society. One is the process of class formation, which governs the economic mobility of households. The other is the system of patriarchy which governs the economic mobility of women independent of class (Cain et al. 1979:406).

The point which comes out of such analyses is that women of all economic classes face not only the risks common to all in rural Bangladesh, such as floods, political disruption, epidemics and crop failures but also the special risks associated with the patriarchal system. Also, state structures are dominated by patriarchal interests and state policies have often tended to work to the detriment of women.

Two scholars have pointed to the contradictory and patriarchal nature of Bangladesh state policy towards women (Guhathakurta 1985, Jahan 1988). Roushan Jahan in her work on violence against women in Bangladesh notes that

gender inequality is deeply embedded in the Bangladesh social structure. All Bangladesh social institutions permit, even encourage the demonstration of unequal power relations between the sexes and try to perpetuate the interests of patriarchy (Jahan 1988:217).⁹

Meghna Guhathakurta similarly observes that "the policies followed by the Bangladesh state, on the ideological plane consist of those processes within society which help the perpetuation, imposition and internalization of male structures in society in which women are subordinated. Such processes may embrace social customs and practices, religious codes and beliefs and social legislation" (Guhathakurta 1985:82).

Gender structures influence class structures and isolating one from the other results in a failure to comprehend the complexity of the interrelationships. Women in

Bangladesh are subject to the effects of both class and gender differentiation. There is need for explicit recognition of the specificity of women's oppression, beyond and in addition to that stemming from class. In addition to the effect of development strategies of the state on women as members of a socio-economic class, there are differential effects by gender within each class. Relations of exploitation and domination, especially gendered class relations, constitute civil society in Bangladesh as civil society is not gender neutral. Women have unequal access to the spheres of civil society. Gender differentiation thus plays an important role in structuring civil society.

Like gender, another issue which has often been left out of or segregated in the discussion of political economy of Bangladesh, is the environment. Environmental concerns and their close interactions with gender and class have not been given adequate consideration by either the neo-Marxists or the liberal positions discussed above. This dissertation, in contrast, recognizes the important interconnections between environmental degradation, women's status and socio-economic inequalities in Bangladesh. As discussed in Chapter One, basic survival of the poor in rural areas is deeply dependent upon access to and use of natural resources, more commonly known as common property resources. The decline in common property resources and increasing privatization and concentration of

ownership of resources reduces the availability of such resources for the rural poor. Thus, any discussion of state and civil society relations which ignores the class/gender differential impact of environmental degradation and the interconnections of gender, class and environmental concerns is inadequate. The implications of state strategies on environmental issues are thus closely related to preexisting inequalities in class and gender relations. Although the environmental agenda has been strongly articulated and linked directly to poverty and inequality by the actors in civil society in the form of social movements, state policies on the environment have favored the relatively privileged section of the population and increased the negative consequences for a significant section of the underprivileged. As will be discussed in Chapter Four, the gender/class differential impact is apparent in state policies on the environment (Adnan 1991, Haider 1993, Curry and Karim 1993).

The point which comes out of the above discussion as pointed out by Gramscian theorists is that the state and civil society in Bangladesh are interacting and interdependent structures. They form a fabric of tightly interwoven threads even if they have their own independent patterns. The state, which is both an instrument and an arena of class struggle, penetrates civil society through its multiple forms of interventions. The state reflects the structural and

ideological power of dominant groups in society. The tendency has been to control people's lives and to subordinate their choices to what passes as the "larger national interest". The rationale of state intervention in economic development to generate surplus, to increase productivity, to balance payments, to subsidize imports thus encroaches upon individual freedom, class, gender and environmental interests and violates human rights. In the name of higher "national goals", power holders and their allies often use the state to suppress non-state actors and thus prevent the rise of a more democratic system. In the past few years the state appeared to be responsive to civil society pressures as may be seen in its policies incorporating people's participation in NEMAP and FAP discussed in later chapters. However, such responses were primarily donor driven and the policies remained totally inadequate as they ignore structural reforms.

On the other hand, there are also forms of oppression in civil society based on class and gender which support the oppressive state. Civil society can be the site of the worst forms of discrimination as civil society organizations of the elite can be oppressive as they are bent on maximizing their supremacy. The rural elites in Bangladesh have predominated the rural power structure and have been highly insensitive to the dynamics of gender discrimination, consequences of environmental degradation on the poor and the marginalized and

to the participation of the masses at the level of decision making. They have worked in alliance with the state agencies and supported government programs which were detrimental to the interests of the masses as discussed later. Thus, the civil society organizations of the marginalized in Bangladesh have remained vulnerable and subordinated.

Socio-economic inequalities, state repression, gender discrimination, class/gender differential impact of environmental degradation and poverty, however, are bound to generate the seeds of subordinate class resistance in civil society. This is the site where subordinate classes construct their own forms of mobilization and opposition and acquire in the process a sense of collectivized grievances and interests. While such forms may not necessarily be expressed in class terms, they constitute the raw material of class consciousness. Thus it may be argued that although patron-client relations still predominate in many areas of rural Bangladesh, there is a trend towards the breaking up of these relations and the forming of new forms of consciousness and new alliances. This is a growth of consciousness not only along class lines but among other social categories and issue areas. Women's groups, environmental groups, peasant groups, landless groups and other social groups have become conscious of the need to organize and unite for fighting against oppression and subordination. These act as points of

countervailing pressures by civil society on existing state policies and structures. These may also be viewed as containing radical potential to challenge diverse forms of power and domination which permeate civil society.

Several scholars of South Asia have pointed to the emergence and increasing importance of such countervailing power in civil society. Rajni Kothari in his work on India found that although the masses are on the rise, the typical avenues for mass mobilization and civil society formation (trade unions, political parties, press and the institutional channels) through which the masses ought to have found expression, are found to be wanting, co-opted and corrupted. According to him,

It is in this state of vacuum that the real counter trends are to be found -- not in the party system, not in the arena of the electoral policies and of state power, not in the typical confrontation between the so called haves and have nots within the conventional economic space dominated by trade unions. In their place there is emerging a new arena of counter action, of countervailing tendencies, of counter cultural movements and more generally of a challenge to existing models of thought and action....This challenge is an effort to redefine the scope and the range of politics. It is an effort to open up new spaces in both the arena of the state and in several other spheres of civil society outside it (Kothari 1993:70).

Similarly Poona Wignaraja, analyzing new social movements in civil society in various regions of the world observes,

these movements range from large collective protest movements to small scale development actions. Some have clear organizations, others are 'processes' which may not

have any organization to begin with. But they are all part of a continuing process of political, economic and social change and exhibit both temporal and cultural specificity (Wignaraja 1993:xvi).

Anisur Rahman in his study on "people's self development" in Bangladesh, found that a number of organizations of landless workers assume responsibility for the welfare of not only their members but all the "poor" in their villages. Some organizations have gone further and have initiated development work involving and benefitting the village community as a whole. Rahman observes,

In recent years, such popular initiatives, spontaneous or 'animated' and 'facilitated' by social activists have been increasing...these grassroots movements and associated animation and facilitation work have by now matured sufficiently and exhibit enough convergent thinking among significant trends through networking, exchanges, mutual cooperation and joint articulation in terms of their philosophical orientation, to provide the basis for outlining some key dimensions of their alternative development paradigm (Rahman 1993:216).

This kind of rising opposition pressure from social groups who have been marginalized over distribution of income, sectoral priorities and direction of development itself, is a very important development in the social sphere in Bangladesh. This pressure is giving rise to scattered movements in civil society in the country. These groups are demanding rights from the state to express social identities not catered to and to express and exercise a resistance to the many ways in which state and wider society have dominated popular sectors. These new social movements are grounded in identities related to

gender, place, ethnicity or environmental concerns. Although these social groups and movements are scattered and largely unorganized they are all part of a continuing process of political, economic and social change. They have made their presence felt and have made conscious attempts to articulate their demands, interests and needs in various issue areas. The emergence of the women's movement and the environmental movement in Bangladesh discussed in Chapter Five is illustrative of such attempts. By this conscious attempt they are responding to gaps in state/society relations. It may be argued that through raising mass consciousness, building countervailing power and initiating equal access to resources for the poor for instance, the dominant structures in society could be modified and changed. As will be elaborated in Chapter Five, such responses are having an impact in not only changing state/society relations but also in questioning the basic premises on which such relations rest.

The approach adopted here in analyzing state and civil society in Bangladesh gives a central place to examining the interconnections across different issue areas -- how gender, class and environmental concerns are intertwined and how they relate to each other and to the state and civil society which are also interdependent structures. This dissertation recognizes the need to pay attention to the fact that in any discussion of political economy, gender and environmental

issues are not subordinate to class issues but are equally fundamental. So, an examination of the structures of domination is essential to comprehend gender relations and class relations and their interactions with the environment. It is necessary to recognize and mobilize against the multiple forms of exploitation and oppression present in civil society and to examine how these relations are reproduced within different social categories. It is necessary to identify where and how state structures sustain or reinforce gender inequality and class inequality and how environmental consequences of the strategies of such structures have class/gender implications. An adequate understanding of political economy cannot be undertaken without taking note of the gender dimension or the environmental dimension. In the next chapter we will look at the prevailing theoretical approaches linking gender, class and environment for delineating the theoretical orientation underlying this study.

NOTES

1 There is a wide ranging discussion about the local form of class relations in South Asia. Many of these center on the 'mode of production' debate which attempts to locate the South Asian situation in terms of Marxist analysis. Key contribution on Bangladesh have been Bertocci (1972), Abdullah et al. (1976), Wood (1976), Rahman (1986) and Jahangir (1979, 1982).

2 The concept of social formation belongs to the Marxist theoretical framework. According to Poulantzas, "The social formation itself constitutes a complex unity in which a certain mode of production dominates the others which compose it. It is a social formation historically determined by a given mode of production" (Poulantzas 1973:15).

3 Alavi's theory concerning the state in post colonial societies has been the object of considerable debate, especially in an African context. Interesting points were raised by Saul 1976, Leys 1976 and Ziemann and Lanzendorfer 1977. However, here we focus on the critique of Alavi's theoretical approach in the context of Bangladesh.

4 Ali Reaz in his book State, Class and Military Rule, analyzes the state as a differentiated set of institutions and personnel which has a legitimate monopoly on authoritative rule making" (1995:260). He observes,

what is meant by the state apparatus is the complex set of institutions staffed by a professional bureaucracy and armed forces, specialized to some degree or other, which together ensure the formulation and execution of policies. Secondly, the state represents a concentration of economic and political power. Thirdly, it also represents a concentration of authority, which means, in the ideological sense, it is able or at least claims to give legitimacy to the actions of those who act in its name (1995:260).

Reaz's study demonstrates that the underlying structures of the state in a post colonial peripheral society reproduced the conditions whereby the military bureaucratic oligarchy emerge as the core of the power bloc. According to him the dynamics of the relatively autonomous state, the crises of hegemony of the ruling classes and the political and economic crises

embedded in the peripheral status of the country were the three primary structural factors that initially precipitated authoritarianism under a civilian regime in independent Bangladesh. But as the authoritarian policies failed to resolve the crises of authority of the ruling class, the composition of the power bloc was reorganized through the violent coup d'état of 1975. The intervention of the military in Bangladesh politics was also undertaken to transform the state apparatus in such a manner that the military bureaucratic oligarchy occupies a preeminent position in all basic structures of authority and, hence, it was the final act of their ascension from an undermined position to the center of the power bloc. In conjunction with the military, the civil bureaucrats emerged as the key persons in the decision making machinery. The bureaucrats in general and military bureaucrats in particular have wielded so much power over the last 15 years that it has become impossible to make any political decisions sidetracking them (1995:275).

5 The neo-Marxist concept of 'comprador bourgeoisie' recognizes the crucial role of international capital within a national social formation and the nation state and its capacity to impose underdevelopment or dependant development. A comprador bourgeoisie is that part of 'national capital' which is directly dependent upon foreign capital (transnational corporations). Through the comprador bourgeoisie and its access to national political power, neo Marxists have argued the decisive representation of international capital within the nation state.

6 He means that up to 1947 there was colonial domination by the British and from 1947 to 1971 domination by the Pakistani.

7 Studies such as BRAC 1983, Areans and Beurden 1977 and Hartman and Boyce 1983, have highlighted the oppressive measures employed by the rural elites in collusion with petty officials of the state to maintain social control, appropriate surplus from the agrarian economy and secure monopoly of access to resources supplied by the state.

8 Patriarchy may be understood as a form of gender relations in which there is systematic control by men over social and economic resources and female sexuality (Aziz 1979, Jorgensen 1983). According to H. Hartmann "patriarchy is a set of social relations in which there are hierarchical relations among men

which enable them in turn to dominate women" (1981:18).

9 Roushan Jahan in her work has looked at the manifestations of patriarchy at the two extreme ends of the social spectrum - in the family, the smallest social unit, providing examples of gender violence in intimate circumstances and relations and by the state, the ultimate social authority, providing examples from policy formulation, legislation and implementation of laws at the national level.

CHAPTER THREE

GENDER, CLASS AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN DEVELOPMENT:

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

State and civil society are interdependent structures and the state reflects society's class relationships. However, a focus only on class undermines gender relations in society and their important interconnections with class and environmental concerns. It is clear from the previous chapter that in any discussion of the political economy of Bangladesh, gender and environmental issues are of equal importance as class.

The issues of gender, class and environmental concerns in sustainable development and their linkages have been viewed from various theoretical perspectives. Although some of the perspectives carry a mixture of approaches and are sometimes overlapping, three broad streams of thinking may be discerned : 1) ecofeminism 2) "women and environment" approach and 3) alternative development perspectives. Influenced by the "women and environment" approach and to some extent, ecofeminist thought, development institutions -- including the state in Bangladesh, international donor agencies and some non-governmental organizations -- have adopted an approach to the issues of gender, class and the environment and their linkages in their policies and programs. These issues are often considered within the framework of a reform of present development practice, leaving no room for questioning the

epistemological assumptions underlying the dominant model of development as will be evident from discussions in Chapter Four. Relying on the externally perceived "problems" and "solutions", these theoretical constructs have often been insensitive to local conditions and have failed to connect and link gender, class and environmental concerns in their policies and programs. They are also apolitical and ignore the role of civil society actors and their need to take control over the development process. I draw, however, upon some alternative development perspectives, which offer valuable insights in formulating alternatives which not only question the assumptions of the dominant model but also provide input in the construction of an approach to development which links gender, class and environmental concerns.

The purpose of this chapter is to critically analyze these theoretical perspectives and evaluate their relevance in explaining the links in the context of Bangladesh. It theorizes how institutions and social forces are making the linkage and what impact this has in challenging the prevailing notion of development. I argue that there is a material basis in the linkage of gender, class and environmental concerns in Bangladesh which is not given adequate consideration in government development plans. The state's approach is embedded in a "women and environment" perspective, which ignores gender and class differential interest on the environment and simply

adds women, class and environmental concerns to existing policies without questioning the assumptions underlying the dominant mode of development. Clearly, such an approach does not call for structural changes. As discussed in the previous chapter, it relies extensively on liberal thinking which ignores the multiple oppressions present in civil society structured by class, gender, race and ethnicity. In contrast, some of the alternative approaches, mostly propounded by Southern scholars, do provide important insights into the roots of the crisis of development in Southern countries and call for the transformation of existing power structures in society. I have drawn on such approaches to argue that the social forces in civil society in Bangladesh are no longer ready to accept the oppressive structures in society and gender and class blind development policies. They are responding to the multifaceted crises in their lives by empowering themselves and organizing and mobilizing in the form of new social movements, women's movements, environmental movements and peasant movements all over the country which will be discussed further in Chapter Five. Such movements in civil society are playing a catalytic role in linking gender and class with environment in development concerns, thereby challenging the prevailing notion of development in state's approach.

ECOFEMINISM

The term ecofeminism refers to a significant stream within the feminist movement containing a range of theoretical positions which rest on the assumption that there are critical connections between the domination of nature and of women (King 1989, Plant 1989, Diamond and Orenstein 1990, Biehl 1988, Warren 1987, 1990, Plumwood 1986, 1988, 1992, Cheney 1987, Zimmerman 1987, Ruether 1979, Salleh 1989, Cox 1992, Merchant 1982, 1989, 1990, Shiva 1988, WEN 1989). In ecofeminism, nature is the central category of analysis in which ecology has been considered from a feminist perspective. Ecofeminists see the woman/nature connection as a vantage point in the struggle for new ways of relating to nature that are not characterized by domination and control. This school of thought is of fairly recent origin, has predominantly Western roots, and an increasingly vocal and influential presence. A common platform for the different positions within ecofeminism is that all of them derive from a critique of patriarchy and patriarchal epistemological frameworks. Beyond this common ground there is a vast area of difference. Theoretical debates on the theme have highlighted contradictions and shortcomings within ecofeminism. Ecofeminism embodies within it several different strands of discourse. Carolyn Merchant identifies liberal, cultural and social ecofeminism, which reflect different positions within

the Western feminist movement.¹ Key Western ecofeminist theorists have, however, not seen any problem with extending their analysis to the "third world" (Merchant 1992, Plumwood 1992, Plant 1989, Diamond and Orenstein 1990). As Val Plumwood observes,

Ecological feminism has grown up especially in the women's, peace and ecology movements ... In the third world the connection between women's interests and the health of nature is especially apparent (Plumwood 1992:10).

This line of thought ignores the reality that Western ecofeminist thought is derived from a specific social, economic, political and intellectual history. One cannot assume its universal relevance and meaning. However, ecofeminism has also been espoused by scholars in Southern countries, (Shiva 1988, Salleh 1989) most notably Vandana Shiva.

Although ecofeminism is still taking shape, it is possible to outline some key positions shared by a range of ecofeminist literature -- these can be grouped around the 1) women-nature linkage 2) the opposition to domination of nature by culture and 3) the beliefs in non-hierarchical networks in nature.² The purpose here is to focus on some of the major elements of this approach to examine whether and to what extent they feed into the formulation of an approach which links gender, class and environmental concerns in development.

A significant strand within ecofeminism revalues the

spiritual, the intuitive and the instinctive as alternative and superior forms of knowledge to science and rationalism. It derives from a philosophy of feminism grounded in women's affinity with the forces of nature as opposed to men's urge to control and manipulate the natural world through application of the scientific method. As Yenestra King observes,

We can nonetheless consciously choose not to sever the woman/nature connection by joining male culture. Rather, we can use it as a vantage point for creating a different kind of culture and politics that would integrate intuitive, spiritual and rational forms of knowledge, embracing both science and magic insofar as they enable us to transform the nature-culture distinction and to envision and create a free ecological society (King 1989:19).

This suggests that the superiority of the feminine is an explicit theme in ecofeminist literature with women seen as spiritual and intuitive in opposition to patriarchal and rational men. As Vandana Shiva notes, "women are custodians of a feminine principle³ which represents an organic unity with nature from which men and developed industrial cultures are alienated and which must be recovered" (Shiva 1988:147).

In the ecofeminist argument, the connection between the domination of women and that of nature is basically seen as rooted in values and beliefs that place women and the non-human world hierarchically below men. So they call upon women and men to reconceptualize themselves and their relationships to one another and to the non-human world in non-hierarchical ways. Many ecofeminists have located the domination of women

and nature primarily in ideological terms, neglecting the material source of this dominance based on economic advantage and political power (King 1989, Salleh 1989, WEN 1989). According to the Women's Environmental Network (WEN), "women have a 'special relationship' with the environment and retain close links with the natural resource base" (WEN 1989:84). The inherent closeness of women and the environment is simply assumed. However an intensifying struggle for survival in developing countries (like Bangladesh) highlights the importance of the material basis for the link between gender and the environment. It is critical to examine the underlying basis of women's relationship with nature at levels other than ideology. Although ecofeminists highlight some of the important conceptual links between women and nature and the ways of acting upon them, few of them have gone beyond the level of assertion to trace these links in concrete terms.

Two scholars Carolyn Merchant (1980) and Vandana Shiva (1988) have, however, analyzed the women/nature connection from a historical perspective. For Europe, Merchant sees the Scientific Revolution as bringing about the separation of nature from culture, the association of women with nature and the domination of both by mankind. Merchant observes,

In investigating the roots of our current environmental dilemma and its connections to science, technology and the economy, we must reexamine the formation of a world view and a science that, by reconceptualizing reality as a machine rather than a living organism, sanctioned the domination of

both nature and women (Merchant 1980:xix).

In Merchant's view, the Scientific Revolution is seen as heralding the era in which women as well as nature came to be dominated, controlled and exploited in contrast to organic conceptions of nature and gender in earlier times.⁴ Although Merchant traces the roots of exploitation, history appears in a linear manner in her analysis, which takes little account of the changing material conditions of life.

For India, Shiva emphasizes the role of colonialism in creating the connection between women and nature. Shiva argues that the everyday struggles for the protection of nature take place in the cognitive and ethical context of the categories of the ancient Indian world view in which "nature is Prakriti, a living and creative process, the feminine principle from which all life arises" (Shiva 1988:xviii). Shiva observes,

All ecological societies of forest dwellers and peasants, whose life is organized on the principle of sustainability and the reproduction of life in all its richness, also embody the feminine principle. Historically, however, when such societies have been colonized and broken up, the men have usually started to participate in life destroying activities or have had to migrate, the women meanwhile usually continue to be linked to life and nature through their role as providers of sustenance, food and water. The privileged access of women to the sustaining principle thus has a historical and cultural and not merely biological basis (Shiva 1988:43).

Like Merchant, Shiva argues that violence against nature is intrinsic to the dominant industrial/developmental models, which she characterizes as colonial impositions. The adoption

of this development model, Shiva argues, was a repressive and violent shift in which the relationship between man and nature as earth mother was replaced by the notion of man as separate from and dominating over inert and passive nature.

Shiva, in her analysis, takes us further than many Western ecofeminists in exploring the links between ways of thinking about development, the processes of developmental change and the impact of these on the environment and on the people dependent upon it for their livelihood. She notes that violence against women and against nature are linked not just ideologically but also materially: "Third World women are dependent on nature for drawing sustenance for themselves, their families, their societies. The destruction of nature thus becomes the destruction of women's sources for staying alive" (Shiva 1988:47). Shiva also focused on women's potential for bringing about an ecological revolution to ensure human survival on the planet. In her view, such an ecological revolution would entail new gender relations between women and men and between human and nature. She has fundamentally questioned the Western model of development as the only possible model and outlined the validity of subjugated and marginal people's knowledge in the search for sustainable models for development and environmental protection. According to her,

a new awareness is growing that is questioning the

sanctity of science and development and revealing that these are not universal categories of progress but the special projects of modern Western patriarchy (Shiva 1988:78).

In her work she grants women agency and promotes struggles by social movements. Shiva observes,

The dominant model of organizing the world is today being challenged by the very voices it had silenced. These voices, muted through subjugation are now quietly but firmly suggesting that the Western model has produced only one culture and that there are other ways of structuring the world Women's struggles for survival through the protection of nature are redefining the meaning of basic categories. They are challenging the central belief of the dominant world view that nature and women are worthless and waste, that they are obstacles to progress and must be sacrificed (Shiva 1988:215).

Though Shiva's work draws attention to women's activism and interest in defence of environmental resources, it has an inflexible and narrow conceptualization of social relations and a limited appreciation of the complexities and interaction between the genders in their pursuit of livelihood.

Her view that all "third world" women are uniformly and categorically left out of development and thereby retain their unity with nature leaves her with an essentialist position that all "third world" women share an understanding of nature. Drawing upon her experience of working with women activists in the Chipko⁵ movement, Shiva argues that,

Third world women have both a special dependence on nature and a special knowledge of nature. This knowledge has been systematically marginalized under the impact of modern science. Modern reductionist science, like development, turns out to be a patriarchal project, which has excluded women as experts and has simultaneously

excluded ecology and holistic ways of knowing which understand and respect nature's processes and interconnectedness as science (Shiva 1988:15).

In her view, women are conceived of as a unitary category with universal characteristics which transcend the time, place and circumstances of their lives. Shiva conflates all "third world" women into one category, failing to differentiate between women of different nations, classes, castes, races, ecological zones and so on. She also ignores forms of domination other than gender which impinge critically on women's position.

The key problem with her approach is that it fails to recognize the diversity of environmental relations which different women experience or the power structures in societies which mediate environmental relations. Class has a central significance for environmental relations. As Bina Agarwal documents for South Asia the adverse effects of environmental degradation fall particularly upon poor women. Agarwal's accounts of how class relations impinge upon gender relations in resource access reveal considerable variations. As Agarwal notes,

poor peasant and tribal women have typically been responsible for fetching fuel and fodder and in hill and tribal communities have also often been the main cultivators. They are thus likely to be affected adversely in quite specific ways by environmental degradation (Agarwal 1992:126).

So, it is critical to address the material realities in which

women of different classes are rooted, which might affect their responses to environmental degradation. Vina Mazumdar in her study has pointed out that,

the diversity among women, between rural and urban women and between different classes of rural women, prevents all women from being clubbed together. No doubt there are common problems and characteristics that all women might share, but equally there are significant differences in the priorities, consciousness and roles of women across classes and regions. Therefore, the problems unleashed by the process of development do not affect all women in equal manner, even in the same regional or cultural context (Mazumdar 1989).

Clearly then, the relationship between women and the environment could vary considerably across women of different socio-economic groups or categories of the population.

In addition to class divisions, women are also disaggregated by age and lifestyles in their environmental relations. Inequalities amongst women exist even at the household level where age frequently patterns divisions of labor, access to and control of resources and decision making powers. These differences have not been taken into account in ecofeminist thought. To posit a special relationship between women and their environments which ignore such multiple sources of difference is problematic because women bear socially formed and changing gender as well as class and generational identities (Jackson 1993:401). The concept of "special relationship" ignores specific contexts of environmental practices. For instance in many developing

countries like Bangladesh, women manage natural resources as part of their livelihood strategies which reflect varying objectives, powerful wider political forces and gender relations.

Shiva's attempts at analyzing the women/nature connection historically and materially and of granting women agency to change the status quo are of critical significance in theorizing how to transform and restructure the dominant development model. However, as the above discussion revealed, her arguments have some analytical problems. Thus, although some strands of ecofeminism question the underlying epistemological assumptions of the dominant development model, and are gender and environment sensitive, their essentialism and biological determinism obscure the reality of the linkages of gender, class and environmental concerns.

The key point which come out of the above discussion is that the implied equivalence between women and nature -- as if all women are by definition environmental managers, which is embedded in some ecofeminist thought -- obscures the variability of women's experience. It inadequately addresses the real diversity of women's lives and histories across race, class, ethnicity and national boundaries. Also, some ecofeminist thought does not allow the analysis of change in the relationship between women and their environments. Critiques of ecofeminism have not only drawn attention to its

biological determinism and essentialism but also to the absence of social, material and historical contexts of the interrelationships of gender, class and the environment in development. According to them, those strands of ecofeminism that trace the connection between women and nature to biology may be seen as adhering to a form of essentialism. They argue that the concepts of nature, culture, gender and so on are historically and socially constructed and vary across and within cultures and time periods. In proposing that the affinity between women and nature is biologically grounded, ecofeminists deny the role of social relations in allocating differing spheres of competence and familiarity to the two genders and ignore the argument that women's general subordination is a consequence of this process (Agarwal 1991, 1992, Rao 1991, Jackson 1993, Joeke 1994).

Ecofeminist thought which has in varying degrees influenced the women/nature conceptualization of donor agencies, state institutions and many non-governmental organizations in Bangladesh has little value in understanding the interconnections of gender, class and the environment in the context of Bangladesh. Women's relation to the environment is not natural and given, and women have no inherent and definitive closeness to nature. In the context of Bangladesh, women's relationship with nature needs to be understood as rooted in their material reality, in their specific forms of

interaction with the environment. It is essential to explore the variable experiences that shape the relationship between women and the environment.

"WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT" PERSPECTIVES

A second school of thought which links gender and environmental concerns assumes uncritically that there is an identity of interest between conservation of local resources and women's concerns (Dankelman and Davidson 1989, Davidson 1989, Dankelman 1985, Monimart 1991, Fortmann 1986, Munyakho 1985, Rodda 1991, Sontheimer 1991, IUCN 1987). The "women and environment" literature is influenced by ecofeminist ideas which emphasize the "natural" affinity of women with their environments. While ecofeminism conceptualizes the link between gender and environment primarily in ontological terms, the "women and environment" literature simply assumes the linkage. The two main arguments of this stream of thinking are that women have a special and close relationship with nature and that women are particularly caring and altruistic in their environmental management. They emphasize the importance of women in their role as environmental resource managers, their vulnerability to declines in resource availabilities and the need to develop environmental programs directed at assisting women essentially in parallel to and separately from men's programs.

Unlike ecofeminism, the conceptualization of the

women/nature connection in this approach is often not explicit but rather implied as "special", that is, inherently closer than that between men and the environment. However this approach is not much concerned with establishing clear evidence or strong argument, but takes its position as self-evident, and is characterized by a strong presumption that women have an affinity with the environment. Environment friendly management practices by women are often understood with an implicit assumption that women are caring, nurturing and selfless beings committed to both future generations and the environment for its own sake (Sontheimer 1991, Monimart 1991, Dankelman 1985). Sally Sontheimer claims that "women express their concern for local ecological problems and a philosophy of living with nature rather than against it" (Sontheimer 1991:15). Similarly in reporting on anti-desertification projects, M. Monimart writes that "women volunteer for the work, drawn by their strong desire to restore the land" (Monimart 1991:4) and claims that "women have got to their feet and are trying to halt environmental destruction" (Monimart 1991:39). Irene Dankelman in her work also has affirmed "the invisible bond existing between women, the environment and development" (Dankelman 1985:17). Within such studies the linkage of women and the environment is either assumed or asserted and taken as prescribing a course of action in which women are mobilized for conservation. Irene

Dankelman and Joan Davidson highlight the necessity to reorient development towards sustainability by putting rural women in the South, "the principal victims of environmental degradation and the most underprivileged people", at the center of consideration. Their responsibility for daily survival tasks qualifies women to be "among the most important and best experienced actors in bringing about that sustainability" (Dankelman and Davidson 1989:xiii). This approach accepts and celebrates the women/nature association uncritically and fails to specify the nature of the association.

There are a number of studies within this perspective both by Western and Southern scholars which document women's role in environmental struggles. Much of this literature does not use concepts of material or social reproduction, nor gender analysis, but simply describes the gender division of labor and that too narrowly in terms of tasks. It also does not take into account how the gender division of labor varies between societies (Dankelman and Davidson 1991, Sontheimer 1991, Rodda 1991). It is often held that women know more about the environment because of gender divisions of labor which assign women to many reproductive tasks which bring them into daily contact with fields, forests and rivers. "Women have a profound knowledge of the plants, animals and ecological processes around them" (Dankelman and Davidson 1989:xi). This

view leads to the assertion that women's knowledge equips them for effective conservation and justifies the identification of women as the relevant target group for conservation projects. Like the WID school, this assumption fails to consider the fact that women's knowledge cannot be considered in isolation from men's, because, in comprehending the complexity of environmental relations both genders have to be addressed. Such studies commonly fail to show how the interests of different groups of women are shaped by their dissimilar relationships to conditions of production and reproduction, thereby concealing from view women's disparate needs. Most of these studies give no account of historical change and the shifting meanings of environmental relations. Thus they are static and unable to capture the essence of change and dynamism.

The "women and environment" approach is blind to class and ignores the important inter-linkage of class, gender and environmental concerns. Women are taken as a homogenous category, not only within countries but across nations (for example, Dankelman and Davidson 1989). These homogenizing approaches, like ecofeminism, fail to recognize the heterogeneity of women, whose experiences are shaped by class, ethnicity, age, and family structure. They overlook the fact that categories of differentiation structure women's interests on the environment and that variable experiences shape the

relationship between gender and the environment. There cannot be a special relationship between women and the environment because women are not a unitary category and their environmental relations reflect not only divisions among women but also gender and class relations.

This perspective is also influenced by the "Women in Development" (WID) approach. The seventies saw the growth of the WID school of thinking which maintained that true development would not be possible unless women were integrated into the process (Boserup 1970, Tinker and Bramson 1976, Youssef 1974). This school arose as a critique of the existing strategies of growth oriented development. The primary argument of the WID position is that current development policies fail to recognize the contribution of women despite the fundamental roles women play in maintaining the household in informal, rural and even market economies and in their management of natural resources. As an alternative, it suggests that the best strategy for development would be not to wait for the benefits to "trickle down" to the masses, but deliver the goods and services directly to the "target groups" which consisted of socially disadvantaged people like women, the landless and youth. Drawing on Western liberal feminist thinking, the WID school of thought calls for the integration of women into male power structures. The WID goal has been primarily to improve women's lives through such activities as

income generation, literacy and education projects and provision of support for credit and cooperative schemes. WID policy makers and planners focus on modernizing "third world" women, not on understanding their lives and experiences. However, this approach never challenged gender hierarchies. It ignored the possibility that women's development might require fundamental social change.

The WID approach is closely linked with the modernization paradigm and thus begins from an acceptance of existing social and economic structures. It focuses only on how women could better be integrated into ongoing development initiatives. It avoids questioning the sources and nature of women's subordination and oppression and concentrates instead on advocacy for more equal participation in education, employment and other spheres of activity. The WID approach also tends to be ahistorical and overlooks the impact and influence of class, race and culture. The notion of WID takes for granted the existing development process and assumes that the problems lie in women being unable to participate in this process. This notion does not seek to redefine developmental goals, in making women's participation more meaningful.

Influenced by the WID approach, the "women and environment" perspective stresses basically the institutional nature of the problem. Their position relies on the argument that if women and the environment are considered in

development practice, the environmental crisis could be solved. This view influences development agencies which see the interests of women and the environment as coterminous and conceive of a solution to environmental problems through conservation strategies. Government and international agencies' conservation programs seem to be based on the belief that concern for the environment simply means protecting and conserving it at whatever cost. More aid projects are being directed at improving women's position and more development schemes have started involving women as active participants. The "women and environment" approach sees women's agency as confined to environmental friendliness and it is assumed that women relate to the environment in a positive manner except when forced by poverty to do otherwise. Thus, interventions in support of the environment will benefit women, and development agencies are urged to involve women in conservation as fully as possible.

This interpretation of the role of women in environmental concerns has widened over the years and has filtered down into practice. Development agencies (multilateral as well as bilateral) and NGOs have stressed in particular the role of women in "synergistic" and "win win" interventions which are seen to simultaneously advance women's gender interests and meet the objectives of environmental conservation (Jackson 1993:128). The British Overseas Development Administration

(ODA) claims that "synergistic interventions" exist which can effectively tackle poverty alleviation, women and development and environmental conservation goals simultaneously (ODA 1991). The World Bank's World Development Report, 1992, on the environment, similarly asserts complementarity between gender and environmental interests -- "actions which promote income growth, poverty alleviation and environmental improvement" (World Bank 1992:2).

This line of argumentation on women, environment and development is cast within the frame of an improvement of present development practice. The wider social, political and economic changes needed in order to arrive at a sustainable mode of development become secondary or are evaded. The silence about the need for wider transformations in development that could facilitate a sustainable development model on a global level serves basically to preserve the status quo by slightly improving the present model. There is no room to question the epistemological assumptions underlying the dominant mode of development. Such theoretical constructs which explain the women and environment linkage in a passive and non-interactive context, devoid of time and space are unable to see the conflicting interests of women and environment and their interconnections because of a lack of historical and material analyses. Such an approach is inadequate in not only questioning the dominant development

model but also in inter-linking gender, class and environmental concerns in sustainable development.

As we will see in Chapter Four, influenced by this approach, the policy planners within the government of Bangladesh and development agencies see the solution in integrating women in environmental conservation or by simply adding them onto projects and programs. The approach is a piecemeal one; there is little effort to modify the development process itself in a manner that will bring it into greater harmony with the needs of the people and with the need to maintain ecological balance. The preoccupation with environmental protection and conservation ignores the most important need -- to put the environment at the service and control of the people who live within that environment. What these assumptions miss is the social and historical dimension of the subordination of women and the degradation of the environment. They ahistorically link women's subordination with the subordination of nature and perceive the solution as simply integrating women into environmental conservation projects.

These assumptions have been challenged by some scholars who have advanced alternative perspectives in explaining the links between gender, class and the environment in development. These alternative approaches not only call into question received ideas about modernization, they reveal that

power is not exercised solely at the level of the state, that the forces in civil society have the potential to carve out strategies for survival which are environmentally sustainable and gender and class sensitive.

ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVES

In explaining the linkage of gender, class and the environment in sustainable development some scholars, mainly from the South, have adopted a line of thought which mounts a profound critique of the whole development process and calls for transformations towards "alternative development" (Agarwal 1992, Antrobus 1989, Sen and Grown 1987, Wiltshire 1988, Stamp 1989, Cecelski 1987, Rao 1991, Braidotti et al. 1994, Kelkar and Nathan 1991). Although these scholars differ widely in their definition of alternatives, the point which is common to this line of thinking and which is relevant for this dissertation is that it denies the assumption that ahistorically links women's subordination with the subordination of nature, but rather sees environmental relations as socially and historically variable. While acknowledging that in many situations women do have primary responsibility for the use of natural resources, in the sense of being the social agents who collect fuel wood, water, medicinal herbs, spices and other raw materials for livelihood, it notes that these tasks are not so universally ascribed to women as "the women and environment" literature

and ecofeminism suggest. In these perspectives, women's (and men's) relation to environmental resources is often seen as part of a general entitlement and capabilities ascribed to individuals by social relations of gender, class and so on. This stream of thought emphasizes the material basis of the link between gender, class and the environment. These alternative approaches provide important insights into the roots of the crisis of development in Bangladesh and offer an alternative in the search for sustainable development in which gender, class and environmental concerns are incorporated. Although I do not agree with all the positions taken up by these transformational approaches, I do think that some of the positions have important insights to offer and draw on those insights to advance my arguments.

From one point of departure, the DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era) network provides a powerful critique of the dominant mode of development (including WID approaches) as seen by women in the South (Sen and Grown 1987, Antrobus 1988, Wiltshire 1988)⁶. It grew out of discussions in India before the 1985 Nairobi Conference, celebrating the end of the UN Decade for Women, and has continued to organize and deliberate on development issues of concern to women in the South. DAWN researchers have shown that the underlying social causes of inequity and injustice lie in the inequitable relationships between men and women.

Because of this gender inequity, the human costs of poverty and environmental degradation fall hardest on poor women. With its commitment to understanding class and gender inequalities in a global context, DAWN has called for new approaches to development. They argue that a fundamental reshaping has to take place. In their book, Development, Crises and Alternative Visions, Gita Sen and Caren Grown observe that "the development concerns of "third world" women are less bound to gender struggles and more embedded in issues of global redistribution and underdevelopment than feminist struggles in the West" (Sen and Grown 1987). According to them,

feminism cannot be monolithic in its issues, goals and strategies, since it constitutes the political expression of the concerns and interests of women from different regions, classes, nationalities and ethnic backgrounds This heterogeneity gives feminism its dynamism and makes it the most potentially powerful challenge to the status quo. It allows the struggle against subordination to be waged in all arenas -- from relations in the home to relations between nations -- and it necessitates substantial change in cultural, economic and political formations (Sen and Grown 1987:18-19).

Their definition of feminism as inclusive of the struggle against all forms of oppression and their advocacy of gender equality accompanied by changes in other fronts gives a much needed orientation to the reality of interconnections of gender and class relations in the context of Bangladesh and other Southern countries. They have a vision of economic and social development geared to human needs through wider control over and access to political power : empowerment.⁷ Like

proponents of civil society, Sen and Grown talk about "empowering ourselves through organizations" (Sen and Grown 1987). In their view, the limitations of top-down government legislation and top-down "basic needs" programs make it necessary to build change through the struggle for practical needs.

Women's daily struggles around issues of primary relevance to their lives become politicized -- food prices, the cost of living, the lack of social services or the disappearance of their children at the hands of repressive regimes (Sen and Grown 1987:18). These daily struggles become the means of empowerment. Struggles for empowerment take place in the home, the state and the work place. They have emphasized the importance of listening to, and learning from, women's diverse experience and knowledge and of maintaining a commitment to long range strategies dedicated to breaking down the structures of inequity between gender, class and nations. They focus attention to the related problems of poverty and inequality and force recognition of forgotten sections of the population. Sen and Grown observe,

fundamental conflicts have arisen between women's economic well being and wider development plans and processes. Such conflicts occur both because gender relations oppress women and because many long term economic processes have been harmful -- or at best indifferent -- to the interests and needs of poor people in general (Sen and Grown 1987:16).

Another member of DAWN, Peggy Antrobus (1988), outlines

the basis for an alternative type of analysis of development by women from the South. For her, this analysis should be grounded in theories of development and social change which recognize the differences between those that aim at maintaining the status quo and those that seek to promote social change. The latter should recognize the limitations of a focus on economic, materialistic and positivist approaches to social science. DAWN's research methodology is "bottom up" -- that is, starting out from an analysis of micro level experiences of poor, rural and urban women living in the South and linking these to the macro-economic level on the assumption that experience at the micro-level and its analysis should inform macro-economic analysis and vice versa. Their analysis is holistic, integrating social, cultural and political dimensions into economic analysis.

DAWN's analysis of the environmental crisis makes a strong link between economy and ecology. The real issues are seen as maldevelopment and economic injustices within the global economic system as they are manifest in the South. From within the DAWN network, Rosina Wiltshire contests the developmentalist myth that the poor are destroying their environment, that population growth is responsible for environmental degradation and that local people in the South need to be taught by Northern "experts" how to recover their environment (Wiltshire 1988). Refraining from an explicit

elaboration on their understanding of the women/nature connection, DAWN's position is predominantly based on an analysis of global economic processes as perceived by Southern women: over-consumption in the North and by elites in the South coupled with excessive military spending, unfavorable terms of trade, the debt crisis, structural adjustment programs and export oriented production, all increase the burden on the environment in the South. These impacts of global economic processes are important in conceiving the multifaceted crises that has emerged in most Southern countries, including Bangladesh. All these issues are interconnected with gender and environmental concerns. It is necessary to take a holistic approach in interconnecting the issues and searching for a solution to the crisis. In this context, DAWN's approach is useful in comprehending the multifaceted problems in Bangladesh. However, DAWN's approach remains somewhat utopian in nature as it does not give much content to specific issues of gender struggles or environmental struggles in particular societies. Although DAWN scholars calls for new approaches to development, they do not explicitly focus on the linkages of class and gender with environmental concerns or the class/gender differential impact of environmental degradation.

In analyzing the linkage of gender, class and the environment in development, some scholars have emphasized and

shown a sensitivity to social, historical and cultural specificity (Agarwal 1991, 1992, Taylor and Mackenzie 1992, Rao 1991, Stamp 1989, Cecelski 1987, Kelkar and Nathan 1991). Scholars who adopt this approach focus on issues within the context of women's specific historical and cultural experience. They analyze the powerful underlying structures which operate to the benefit of certain classes and groups across international boundaries. They focus on the ways in which site-specific ecological and livelihood systems are linked to the national and global environmental and economic and political systems which shape the opportunities and constraints occurring at the local level. These perspectives provide important insights for understanding class and gender inequalities in a global context and the linkage of class and gender to environmental concerns. However, not all of them, focus on social movements and conflicts in society which play a significant role in articulating the linkage of gender, class and environmental concerns in development.

D.R.F.Taylor and Fiona Mackenzie in their book, Development from Within : Survival in Rural Africa, observes,

substantial rethinking is necessary to ensure the development of theory that has greater historical and social specificity within Africa This can emerge only through an iterative process whereby small-scale event (at the intrahousehold level and through local community action) is examined in the context of large-scale process (Taylor and Mackenzie 1992:xiv)

In the introductory Chapter of the book, Fiona Mackenzie

examines alternative analyses of and prescriptions for the deepening crisis in Africa. Her concern is to expose questions which arise with respect to the potential for local organizations to effect positive change in rural Africa. She observes,

the empowerment of individuals or groups within a community concerns, by its nature, political action. The realization of strategic needs (Molyneux 1985), which go beyond those of 'coping mechanisms' or 'practical needs', reorders social relations. And these may be perceived as a threat, not only to local interests but also to state power (Mackenzie 1992:29).

Mackenzie's analysis reveals the important contradictions that may evolve in terms of state-local relations, of classes or of genders and the potential for local organizations to effect positive social change. However, she does not shed much light on the dynamics of social movements and its relation to civil society.

Bina Agarwal, in many of her works has expanded her analyses of poverty, power and environmental degradation to focus increasingly on gender based conflicts in India over natural resources. In her analysis of the environmental crisis in India, Bina Agarwal develops an approach to gender, class, the environment and development that combines the levels of material reality and ideological construction of meanings. She argues that women are both victims of this crisis in gender specific ways as well as important actors in resolving it.

Given existing intra-household gender inequalities in the division of labor and in access to food, health care, cash income and productive resources, women of such households have typically been left worse off than the men. And because of the primary responsibility that women have for fuel, fodder, and water collection, specially in the rural areas, deforestation and overall erosion of the natural resource base have affected them adversely in an immediate way (Agarwal 1988:114). At the same time, observes Agarwal,

in the course of their everyday interactions with nature, they acquire a special knowledge of species varieties and the processes of natural regeneration. They could thus be seen as both victims of the destruction of nature and as repositories of knowledge about nature in ways distinct from the men of their class. Indeed on the basis of their experiential understanding and knowledge they could provide a special perspective on the processes of environmental regeneration: one that needs to inform our view of alternative approaches to development (Agarwal 1992:116).

For Agarwal, the women/nature link has been socially and culturally constructed, not biologically determined as in ecofeminism. She argues that Western ecofeminism conceptualizes the link between gender and the environment primarily in ideological terms. An intensifying struggle for survival in the developing world, however, highlights the material basis for this link and sets the background for an alternative formulation to ecofeminism which she terms "feminist environmentalism",

The link between women and the environment can be seen

as structured by a given gender and class (caste/race) organization of production, reproduction and distribution. Ideological constructions such as of gender, of nature and of the relationship between the two may be seen as (interactively) a part of this structuring, but not the whole of it, This perspective I term feminist environmentalism (Agarwal 1991:8).

Agarwal suggests that women's and men's relationship with nature needs to be understood as rooted in their material reality, in their specific forms of interaction with the environment. Hence, insofar as there is a gender and class based division of labor and distribution of property and power, gender and class (caste/race) structure people's interactions with nature and so structure the effects of environmental change on people and their responses to it (Agarwal 1992:126). In this conceptualization, therefore, the link between gender, class and the environment can be seen as "structured by a given gender and class (caste /race) organization of production, reproduction and distribution" (Agarwal 1992:127). Such an approach provides a better analytical framework which takes the analysis beyond a narrow focus on "class" or "gender" or "environment" and provides valuable insights in explaining the linkage of gender, class and the environment in the discussion of political economy.

The above discussion demonstrates that the "women and environment" perspective, influenced by the WID approach, stresses basically the institutional nature of the problem. Their strategy revolves around simply adding gender, class and

environmental issues to existing frameworks as an appendage without questioning the underlying assumptions of such practice or going into the roots of the multifaceted crises the country faces. The responses of civil society to the crises in their lives is ignored in such state policies, which relies on the conventional notion of development and neo-liberal assumptions. The ecofeminist approach, on the other hand -- although it mounts a profound critique of the dominant mode of development -- is inadequate in explaining the linkage of gender, class and environment in the context of Bangladesh, as it relies on essentialism and biological determinism which focus on the inherent closeness of women and nature and obscure the variability and heterogeneity of women's experience across race, class, ethnic and national boundaries. Ecofeminist analysis remains a critique without threat to the established order as it remains confined to ways of thinking about transformations but not on ways of acting on them.

In contrast, the alternative development perspectives bring into question the uncritical acceptance of modernity and reminds us that power is not exercised solely at the level of the state. It urges a closer, more localized and specific examination of women's strategies for survival in the South. There are however important differences among the proponents of the various alternative perspectives. As discussed earlier, although DAWN's approach is illuminating in comprehending the

multifaceted dilemmas of development, it does not give much content to specific issues of gender struggles or environmental struggles in particular societies. Their approach remains confined to articulating for new approaches to development, without explicitly laying down the dynamics of acting on it. Other alternative perspectives (Agarwal 1991, 1992, Taylor and Mackenzie 1992, Kelkar and Nathan 1991, Stamp 1989, Rao 1991, Cecelski 1987) provide important insights for understanding class and gender inequalities and the linkage of class and gender to environmental concerns. However, they do not focus on social movements and their transformatory potentials. Although some of them go beyond the critique to focus on gender and class based conflicts (Agarwal 1992, 1991, Mackenzie 1992) they do not shed much light on the transformatory potentials of the new social movements and their relation to civil society.

Drawing on the insights of such perspectives, I argue for an alternative approach which perceives the interconnections of gender, class and environment as socially constructed and inter-linked and treats them in a holistic way. Such an approach not only questions the underlying assumptions of modernity but relies extensively on the forces in civil society to articulate their own problems and find their own solutions.

I argue that there is a need to go to the roots of the

problem and question the prevailing development model. The solution to the environmental crisis and gender and class inequalities cannot be found within the existing development model and power structures because, by their very nature, they depend on over-exploitation of both natural resources and human beings. In the context of Bangladesh, as discussed in Chapter One, the linkage of gender and the environment in development is important especially because in rural areas in the country, environmental degradation is a livelihood crisis. The impact of environmental degradation is felt more acutely by those women who interact with it for survival. Especially, poor rural women have to maintain a reciprocal link with nature due to their marginality and their extensive dependence on natural resources for their own and their family's survival. The close association between women and natural resources is valid primarily in a rural context and especially among women of less affluent families. For such women, the association exists because of their social and economic roles, which over generations have required them to provide food, water, fuel, fodder and income from the surrounding resource base. The knowledge base and skills that build up as a consequence of performing such tasks over several years give rise to the special concerns they share on ecological issues and the understanding they demonstrate in managing natural resources. This consciousness is different from that of men's

and also from that of rural women of affluent households who do not typically carry out such roles. Women's consciousness of the environment is then not something inherent or special, arising out of their being women as propagated by ecofeminists or of being better environmental managers as conceived by the "women and environment" approach. This consciousness is rooted in their social roles and the prevailing gender division of labor, which lead them to interact extensively with natural resources for survival. So, it is not naturally given but socially constructed. It is rooted in the reality of gender and class specific implications of environmental degradation.

The complexities of women's issues and environmental issues cannot be addressed effectively within the confines of existing development projects. To address them would imply more radical changes in society at large. There is a need to incorporate the voices of grassroots people, who are marginalized in the development process but who are at the same time striving to carve out alternative realities in solving their problems. I argue that such responses in civil society are equally important to state interventions in development. These responses are manifesting themselves in the form of new social movements, which are playing an important role in dismantling the existing power structures in society and bringing about transformations in thinking and processes and creating spaces in which the interconnections of gender,

class and environmental concerns are taken into consideration. Examination of the women's movement, environmental movement, the role of NGOs in support of grassroots movements and the case studies of three NGOs discussed in Chapter Five clearly substantiates this argument. Let us first look at the role of state in Bangladesh in the next chapter, in linking gender, class and environmental concerns in development. Chapter Four focuses on the government's gender and environmental planning and policies and examines selected government programs in order to evaluate the extent of success of such programs in making the linkage.

NOTES

1 Liberal ecofeminism draws on liberal feminism which argues that women do not differ from men as rational agents (Simone de Beauvoir 1948, Rachel Carson 1962). For them, environmental problems result from the overly rapid development of natural resources and given equal opportunities women can join men in environmental conservation. Cultural ecofeminism analyzes environmental problems from within its critique of patriarchy and offers alternatives that could liberate both women and nature.

Cultural feminists believe that biologically based domination of women by men is the root cause of oppression closely related to the association of women with nature (Sherry Ortner 1974). They believe that when patriarchy which is an archetypal form of human oppression crumbles, then other forms of oppression will also crumble. Located within the essentialist tradition, cultural feminists see both women and nature as oppressed and subjugated, the victims of patriarchal power structures. They acknowledge a special relationship between women and nature and wish to liberate both together (Mary Daly 1978, 1984, Susan Griffin 1978, Starhawk 1990).

Socialist ecofeminism grounds its analysis in capitalist patriarchy and would totally restructure through a socialist revolution the domination of women and nature inherent in the market economy's use of both as resources. For them environmental problems are rooted in the rise of capitalist patriarchy and the ideology that the Earth and nature can be exploited for human progress through technology (Merchant 1982, 1990, 1992, King 1989, 1990, Plumwood 1986, 1988, 1992, Shiva 1988). Socialist ecofeminism advocates the liberation of women through overturning economic and social hierarchies (that turn all aspects of life into a market society). In their work they have made a critique of patriarchal society, hierarchy and domination. For a thorough discussion of these positions and their critique see Merchant (1992).

2 See especially King 1989, 1990, Plant 1989, Diamond and Orenstein 1990, Merchant 1980, 1982, Griffin 1978.

3 Shiva draws on Hindu religion and philosophy which describes the 'feminine principle' prakriti, as the source of all life. She equates the feminine principle with women in

real life and constructs the practical relation that women have with nature in Indian rural society as the embodiment of the feminine principle. According to her, this relation needs to be recovered as the base for a sustainable mode of development. Shiva cites women's prominent role within the Indian Chipko movement as evidence that the life creating and preserving 'feminine principle' embodied by these women must be reclaimed as the source for an alternative global development model.

4 Critics (Plumwood 1986:126) have, however, pointed out that women and nature were subordinated before the seventeenth century.

5 The Chipko movement is an environmental movement for forest protection and regeneration in the Garhwal hills of Northwest India. The Chipko movement developed in the mid-late 1970s in the Garhwal division of Uttar Pradesh in India out of a Gandhian social development movement. This movement emerged in a context where there was anger over government forest policy which denied local use of trees while giving logging rights to large companies. Floods during the 1970s and land slips were perceived by these social workers as caused by deforestation. Women became the mainstay of the movement which spread widely and focussed on demonstrations, in which trees were hugged, to prevent logging. Chipko is usually represented as demonstrating women's concern for conservation, and taken as an example of spontaneous environmental and community commitment by women.

6 DAWN proposes that a feminist critique of development should begin from the perspectives of the poor women from the South (Sen and Grown 1987).

7 The empowerment approach arises from the writings and grassroots experience of feminists in the Southern countries. This approach allows for diversity and difference rather than simply universalizing from Western feminist perspectives. "Third world" feminists identify the same needs but they have quite different means of achieving them. Empowerment is about change in power relations within a society. The term has been used extensively and variously and has become a theme in the

literature on women, particularly women from Southern countries. Agarwal defines empowerment "as the ability of an individual or group to legitimately ensure that decisions related to entitlement are taken in its favor (be it within family of the family vis a vis the community and the state)" (1990:395). In the context of rural poor women in Bangladesh, empowerment refers to the ability of the individual women or groups of women to achieve some degree of power in controlling material resources and decision making within their own households and within their communities at large.

CHAPTER FOUR

DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS OF THE STATE ON GENDER AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN BANGLADESH

The role of the state in development in Bangladesh in the two decades after independence in 1971 reflects the power of the dominant classes in society. These dominant classes and their allies have often used the state to suppress civil society actors and thus prevent the rise of a more democratic system. The tendency has been to control people's lives and to subordinate their choices in the name of higher "national goals". The rationale of state intervention in development has been centered around generating surplus, increasing productivity, balancing payments and subsidizing imports, while neglecting the issues of people's participation, human rights, individual freedom, differential class and gender interests and environmental concerns. State policies have also ignored the important interconnections of gender, class and environmental concerns in development and the responses of civil society actors to the multifaceted crises in their lives.

This chapter looks at the development interventions of the state in Bangladesh on gender and the environment and examines whether such policies have linked gender, class and environmental concerns. The first section focuses on the government's gender and environmental planning and policies

and its approach to development. The second section examines selected government programs in specific issue areas of gender and the environment and analyzes whether they have been able to connect different groups in society and to interlink different issues in their search for sustainable development.

On the basis of these empirical facts, the chapter argues that the state in Bangladesh has been unable to incorporate and interlink gender, class and environmental concerns in its development interventions resulting in a top down and environmentally destructive development model. The government's approach has been to get on with its projects within definite guidelines, where the interlinkage and interrelationship between issues are often sacrificed. Inadequate consideration is given to social, economic, environmental, class and gender aspects before the implementation of projects. Government policies have prioritized development projects as a point of departure instead of the people, their needs and their living conditions. Such an approach does not weigh the social costs against short term benefits. Local people's opinion or participation is also not given priority in such an approach. There is usually no basis for an open discussion with the people whose lives may be fundamentally changed due to the implementation of the projects. This approach has also remained confined within existing development paradigms which

do not call for transformations in the prevailing order.

In recent years, the government has been increasingly forced to pay attention to gender and environmental issues in its policies, largely as an outcome of donor pressure as well as pressure from the emerging women's movement and environmental movement in the country. However, the state's approach has many commonalities with the "women and environment" perspective, discussed in Chapter Three, which basically stresses the institutional nature of the problem and calls for reform of existing policies rather than structural transformation. The class/gender differential impact of environmental degradation is not given adequate consideration in formulating government development plans and programs. The goals and aspirations of women are assumed rather than investigated in development plans and there is a tendency for constructing strategies for improving their lives based on these assumptions and not on the basis of actual experiences and needs. Such a tendency has resulted in adopting a strategy which simply adds gender, class and environmental issues to existing frameworks without questioning the underlying assumptions of development or interlinking the issues in development plans and programs.

GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT PLANS

For Bangladesh, the major instruments of national planning are the Five Year Plans and Annual Development Plan

exercises. Successive governments in Bangladesh have spelled out their expenditure priorities within the framework of long term development plans and annual budgets. In the Five Year Plan documents, lofty goals and objectives are identified, resources committed and policies and institutions put in place. However, the autonomy of the planning exercise is often eroded and its credibility suffers as the plan is built around a sizeable inflow of external resources, usually Official Development Assistance (ODA). It is thus not unusual for plans to experience shortfalls in expenditure, sizeable delays in implementation and distortions in the original priorities spelt out in the plan. The plans are made operational through the annual budgets, which reflect not only the preference of the government, but also the preference of external donors whose resource commitments, project preferences and pace of aid disbursement significantly determine the realized development expenditure priorities of aid-dependent states like Bangladesh (Sobhan 1992:16). Thus, the national development budgets, which are heavily dependent on foreign aid and international financing, are subject to development priorities determined in the interests of international agencies.

The policies of international donors, in spite of reforms in the form of stabilization policies and structural adjustment programs (SAPs), continue to be based on

conventional development thinking and practice. The development process is still considered mainly as an economic exercise, including the allocation of scarce resources by governments and big private sector corporations. Development assistance promotes programs through provision of capital and material input, which consolidate vested interests and facilitate the monopolization of resources by specific groups in society. The result is that the benefits of development programs rarely "trickle down" to the poor, since benefits tend to be captured by the dominant classes in society.

The neo-Marxist theories of Bangladesh state discussed in Chapter Two demonstrate that external resource inflows directly and indirectly further the growth and prosperity of a class of intermediaries. According to these perspectives, foreign aid has helped create an elite class aligned with the political regime which is dependent on aid to maintain their income and consumption patterns. Development programs of the state promoted by international aid agencies were largely viewed in this approach as generating greater material disparity and intensifying the differentiation and polarization of rural society in Bangladesh (Sobhan 1982, 1983, Jahangir 1979, 1982, 1986, Rahman 1986, Hossain 1991, Alamgir 1976, 1978, Bertocci 1970).

Another and more important consideration is that while preparing national plans in Bangladesh, a central planning

approach, which has failed to consider local conditions and needs, has been dominant. It has failed to integrate and interconnect different actors and issue areas. The tendency has been to adopt a sectoral approach. People's participation in plans which affect their lives was not given priority. In a country where continuing inequalities (between classes and genders) undermine the social fabric, a central concern should be to restructure socio-economic relations and not merely to dictate policies for marginal improvements. However, as discussed below, welfarist programs for marginal improvements have informed national plans. In spite of these realities of planned development in Bangladesh, the government's Five Year Plans remain the accepted vehicles for declaration of its development priorities. The shifts in development approaches and orientations of the state may be observed in successive development plans. The following discussion focuses on gender and environmental policies in Five Year development plans.

After the liberation war in 1971, the Bangladesh governmental policies in general concentrated on salvaging and reconstructing a war ravaged economy. Women's issues were considered within a welfare/rehabilitation orientation which remained primarily limited to relief and rehabilitation of women affected and dislocated by the war. However, over the years, government plans have increasingly referred to WID/gender issues, in large measure due to donor pressure and

incentive and lobbying by women's groups. WID objectives have, however, changed over the years following trends established by the donors. Rounaq Jahan observes,

the shifts in language -- from welfare to integration to mainstreaming, from WID to GAD¹ -- have taken place in Bangladesh without much internal debate and discussion officials and non officials alike appear to have quickly adjusted to the changes initiated by donors without debating the rationale behind these changes (Jahan 1995:27).

On the other hand, environmental policies in government plans and priorities have been conspicuous by their absence and where they existed, they were inadequate, outdated or unenforced. Environmental considerations were not outlined in the constitution, state policy or other instruments of policy making and implementation. The First Five Year Plan (1973-1978), Second Five Year Plan (1980-1985) and the Third Five Year Plan (1985-90) of the country were devoid of references to environmental factors or ecological principles in the socio-economic development of the country. It was generally believed that environmental concerns related only to industrial pollution and as Bangladesh was not yet an industrialized country, it did not have an environmental problem. This viewpoint was reflected in the fact that the only government department which dealt explicitly with environmental issues was the Department of Environmental Pollution Control (DEPC), which was a poorly staffed and low budget department in the Ministry of Local Government and

Rural Development (LGRD). However, this attitude started changing near the end of the 1980s as the government and the people began to realize that environmental problems are not confined to industrial societies alone, but they can occur also in less developed societies often as a consequence of misguided development efforts. A number of initiatives were launched at the government and public consciousness level.

FIRST FIVE YEAR PLAN (1973-1978)

The First Five Year Plan (1973-78), formulated in the context of economic and physical destruction, emphasized the need to rehabilitate war victims (including widows and raped women), identified women's role as mothers and child rearers, but shied away from any separate allocation for women. The plan did not refer to the role of women in economic development and there was no explicit focus on women as a sectoral category for resource allocation (World Bank 1990a:14). References to women were associated with the commitment to rehabilitate victims of the Liberation war, when, a large number of women had been widowed, raped and otherwise made victims of the social upheaval which characterized the emergence of Bangladesh. Within the First Plan, the five projects directed to women were thus essentially related to the social welfare and rehabilitation of war victims. These few projects were not, however, implemented in time and were carried over into the interim Two

Year Plan (1978-80) period where two new projects for women were added. However, the objectives of government policies started changing after 1976 with the influence of the UN Declaration for Women in 1975 and the growing influence of international feminism.

The UN declaration of the Women's Year and Decade resulted in an influx of interest and project aid in the women's sector in Bangladesh. The need to bring women into focus in development planning was recognized as a part of the strategy of the first UN Women's Decade (1975-85). Also, the world wide extension of the feminist movement and its effects in Bangladesh led to the state's recognition of women's issues. There was a conscious effort to integrate women both at the macro and the micro level. A number of women's forums and feminist groups sprung up throughout the country and mobilized around national and local issues. Some of them were Women for Women (a Research and Study Group), Mahila Parishad, Mahila Samity, Lekhika Sanga and Nari Pokkho. Some of the progressive NGOs began targeting women's development and also shifting their approach from welfare to self-sufficiency. These social forces gradually made their voices heard and implicitly effected changes in the approaches of the government policies. Donor pressure and pressure from indigenous groups forced the state machinery to reconsider and frame policies to incorporate women in their development

programs. However, it was only from a liberal feminist point of view based on the Western capitalist ideology of development that women's issues were taken up as national policy matters.

The 'Women in Development' (WID) school of thought which stressed increasing the role of women in the development process influenced the policy makers in the country during this time. In 1976, the scope of women-related activities was expanded through the formation of the Jatiyo Mahila Sangstha, a national women's organization. At the governmental level, the first Women's Affairs Directorate was established in 1976. This was later merged with the Ministry of Social Welfare in 1978, indicating a reduction of women's concerns to social welfare issues. These actions were accompanied by a simultaneous rethinking of the trickle down approach of the modernization school and by the introduction of the Basic Needs and poverty-focussed approach (Guhathakurta 1990). Through this new approach, women along with the landless and other target groups were selected as beneficiaries of the development process, the emphasis of which had partly shifted from large scale infra-structural development to small scale project oriented development. There was a shift from a welfare/rehabilitation orientation in state policies to an emphasis on drawing women into productive activities. As Zarina Rahman Khan observes,

Governmental policies towards women become increasingly geared towards providing women with income generating activities. This was, however, not done on the basis of a redefinition of women's earlier roles which involved work in the family. The traditional conceptualization of women as wives, mothers and homemakers continued. The new emphasis in income generation was based on such an assumption (Z.R.Khan 1991:19).

Thus, women's issues were conceptualized within the context of the prevailing ideology and without proper analysis of women's changed situation. As a result, the realities of changing needs of women were not reflected in the policies formulated and the programs that followed.

TWO YEAR PLAN (1978-1980)

Women's development was first considered as a development issue within the Two Year Plan (1978-80). There was a shift in the focus of national plans and programs from rehabilitation and social welfare to skill development and self-employment programs. A Women's Affairs Division was created under the President's Secretariat. The plan gave a high priority to women's development, so that "they can exercise their socio-economic rights and shoulder responsibilities" (GOB 1973). The main emphasis was in the fields of vocational training, agriculture-based rural development programs, establishment of cottage industries, production and sales center and creation of facilities for working women and children (Ahsan 1993:14). However, by 1980, only 2 of the 7 projects directed to women were completed.

Only Tk. 105.6 million was allocated to these projects between 1978-80, out of a total plan size of Tk.84,160 million (Table 8).

TABLE 3
ALLOCATIONS FOR WOMEN'S SECTOR IN BANGLADESH'S FIVE YEAR PLANS
(in million Taka)

	Total Plan Size	Allocation for
WID		
Two Year Plan (1978-80)	84,160	105.6
Second Five Year Plan (1880-85)	160,600	310
Third Five Year Plan (1985-90)	386,000	500
Fourth Five Year Plan (1990-95)	672,300	880

Source R.Sobhan Planning and Public Action for Asian Women, 1992:113.

SECOND FIVE YEAR PLAN (1980-1985)

The Second Five Year Plan (1980-85) formulated under the influence of the international climate of the UN Women's Decade was the first to carry an explicit financial allocation for women (GOB 1980). Though the physical targets of programs for women were ambitious, financial allocation for the sector was rather modest. Only about 0.2 percent of the total public sector financial outlay of the Second Five Year Plan was allocated for Women's Affairs (Khan 1988:86). The programs covered diverse fields, such as skill development, farming,

nutrition, child care, literacy, accommodation for career women and job seekers, rehabilitation of deserted women and rural credit schemes. To take up income generation activities through self employment and wage employment, women were trained in different skills at the village level. Some poultry and dairy farms (for training and production) were set up at the district level. To improve the health situation of women, family welfare, nutrition and child care facilities constituted the main elements of most of the programs which only reinforced traditional views of women's roles.

The Second Five Year Plan philosophy and actual commitment underlying women's issues lacked, however, a clearly articulated policy perspective. From the list and coverage of programs, it is evident that the efforts were rather fragmented and far too limited to meet the needs. The piecemeal and ad hoc nature of the projects seemed to locate women in domestic-based production, thereby ignoring equity concerns. The fact that class differentiation can have a differential impact on women was ignored in project formulation. Also, the linkage of gender with environmental concerns was not reflected in governmental programs. In fact, environment as an issue area was not even considered in the Plan. Plan expenditures remained premised on the location of women within the household and were designed to make women somewhat more productive within the family as distinct from

realizing their potential as individuals. Apart from family planning, other targeted development programs reached fewer than 10 percent of the women (Khan 1988:86). Most programs, therefore, could only touch the periphery leaving the basic problems unsolved. As Roushan Jahan observes,

Admittedly, the rhetoric of the Second Five Year Plan shows more awareness of the need to increase women's participation in the development process, and various steps to facilitate this have been undertaken during the Second Plan period (1980-1985). Yet one suspects that the policies and programs did not emanate solely from a genuine concern for the gender gap. Rather they were the result, at least, partly, of pressure from such disparate groups as Western donor agencies and local women's groups and partly of efforts to fulfill the goals of the UN Decade for Women which the government is obliged to undertake as a signatory to the World Plan of Action (Roushan Jahan 1988:222).

Jahan's observation clearly illustrates that state policies have been largely indifferent to the issues of gender differentiation in society during the Second Five Year Plan period. The extent to which it has incorporated gender concerns in development plans has been mainly due to donor pressure and to a lesser extent to pressure from feminist groups and women's movements which started to become vocal at that time. It needs to be noted here that aid-dependence discussed in Chapter Two, has had a contradictory impact in this context. Given the weakness of civil society in Bangladesh (at least until recently), donor influence has had some positive impact in placing gender on the agenda of state

policies. External donors tended to support a "women and environment" approach discussed in Chapter Three, reinforcing this tendency in state policy.

THIRD FIVE YEAR PLAN (1985-1990)

The worsening situation of women and its bearing on economic development gained greater prominence in the Third Five Year Plan (1985-90). More emphasis was put on women's concerns by stating that "the integration of women is considered essential to bringing them under the purview of development activities by exploiting their full potential" (GOB 1985). The concerns of rural women, women's education and the promotion of employment opportunities were given more emphasis. There were several projects under health, education and agriculture which were considered to have a significant impact on the life of women, though not directly addressing the poverty problem. The plan focused on the generation of productive employment and human resource development. However, in terms of financial allocation, only 9.59 percent and 11.13 percent were allocated to agricultural and social sector respectively, figures which have a direct relevance to poverty alleviation in contrast to 27.92 percent to industries and power sector (Khan 1988:118). Women-specific multi-sectoral projects directly addressing poverty were few. Of the four explicitly women-oriented development schemes under the population control and family planning sector, the major focus

was on family planning and population control rather than the development of women. The allocation to the Women's Affairs sector constituted only 0.2 percent of the total public sector plan outlay (Khan 1988:119). Large industries, having limited employment generation capacity in general and hardly any scope for female employment in particular, claimed 75 percent of the sectoral allocation, leaving a meager 7.5 percent to agro-supportive small scale and rural industries which employ significant numbers of women (Khan 1988:118). Though the basic theme of the plan was alleviation of poverty, it overlooked the differential needs of women who are the most disadvantaged group in society. It also ignored the class differential impact of government policies on women. Thus, the gap between reality and rhetoric appeared to be quite considerable in the Third Five Year Plan. The Plan was biased towards assuming that women's position was marginalized. It took little note of the changing roles of women in the national economy as they moved in increasing numbers out of the household and into the market economy. Table 9 shows that in 1981, women constituted 1.5 million of the total civilian labor force, while in 1989 the number increased to 21 million. This shows that increasing number of women members of the household joined the labor force over the years. However, the government Plan gave inadequate consideration to this change in women's situation and continued to reinforce the stereotypical role of women.

TABLE 9
Civilian Labor Force by Sex
(million)

Sex	1981 Census	1985-86 LFS	1989 LFS
Both sex	25.9	30.9	50.7
Male	24.4	27.7	29.7
Female	1.5	3.2	21.0

----- Source
: Labor Force Survey (LFS), 1985-86, 1989
Statistical Pocketbook of Bangladesh 1993 : 100.

The plan thus failed to focus on women as a specific social category and could not really conceptualize the integrated role of women in the development process (Sobhan 1992:28). Women came to be treated as a separate issue, somewhat different and insulated from the general concerns of development. This often led to an adverse effect on the position of women, as they became more marginalized from mainstream development efforts (Task force 1991:331).

By the end of the 1980s, there were widespread responses in civil society to such inadequacies in state policy reflecting the growth of the women's movement. The WID approach based on small scale project interventions was coming under attack from scholars, women's organizations, human rights organizations and some non-governmental organizations. Critics argued that projects with the stated goal of "integrating women into development" most often reflected a

male bias which regarded women solely as housewives and mothers, but which failed to involve women in production (Jahan 1989, Kabeer 1991, Lewis 1993, Sobhan 1992, Ahmad 1992). The need to integrate gender concerns in mainstream planning and policy making was strongly emphasized (Khan 1988, Jahan 1989, Sobhan 1992). Demands were also made by women in general, sometimes articulated through mass-based national movements or through parallel and autonomous women's movements, and at other times (more often than not) expressed through small local non-governmental organizations (Guhathakurta 1992:2). Critics argued that although the government designed separate programs for women and formed a new Ministry, women's concerns entered the development process as an appendage. "Women's projects" were frequently regarded as of secondary importance, often attached on to main development schemes, receiving proportionally less funding. They argued that although the WID school of thought helped to focus on women's issues, the notion took for granted the existing development process and assumed that the problem lay in women being unable to participate in this process. This notion did not seek to redefine developmental goals so that women's participation could become more meaningful for them.

Questions were asked whether women really benefitted from this targeting approach or were they becoming victims of tokenism? This line of argumentation raised the pertinent

point that problems of gender discrimination and exploitation cannot be understood or resolved in a piecemeal manner through the initiation of isolated projects and programs. As Hamida Hossain observes,

we need to move beyond a WID inventory which continues to compartmentalize strategies for women rather than conceptualize a holistic framework of a just and gender sensitive development (Hossain 1991:78).

Gender exploitation has to be understood within the context of a patriarchal world order and fundamental questions have to be posed about the legal rights of women, their economic and social exploitation and oppressive notions of sexuality perpetrated by socio-cultural and religious norms. Such an approach is far removed from any official interpretation of WID concerns.

By the end of eighties, there were visible shifts in government policies and orientations towards gender issues largely as a consequence of the critiques and demands at different levels. The combined advocacy and sustained dialogue by the women's organizations and some local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with the Planning Commission led to the preparation of a position paper on "Mainstreaming Women in National Development" in 1989. There were also important studies undertaken by women activists, government planners, donor agencies and independent researchers, all of which emphasized the need for giving priority to integrating women

into the mainstream of the development process (Hamid 1988, Jahan 1989, S. Khan 1988, 1990, UNDP 1989, World Bank 1990a). The "mainstreaming" approach emphasized the need to integrate gender concerns into general planning and policy making. Instead of merely incorporating women's programs into an overall development pattern which remains largely male oriented, the proponents of the "mainstreaming" approach suggested that the development process could be recast to focus on increasing participation of the female labor force and to include women in decision-making processes at both micro and macro levels, thus "empowering" them.

At the same time there were also dramatic changes in perceptions about environmental issues, their importance in development and their interconnections with gender and class issues. In view of the increasing importance of the environment as a cross-sectoral issue, concerns were voiced at different levels for the creation of a Department of Environment and a Ministry of Environment. Part of this change in perception can be ascribed to the devastating floods of 1988. These floods, which were the worst for many decades, were not associated with particularly heavy rainfall within Bangladesh. They were primarily due to incoming river flows from further upstream. This fact was picked up by the national and international media, which made the link with human interventions upstream, such as building of embankments and

deforestation in the hills and mountains of the upper catchment (Huq and Ali, 1990:37). Massive deforestation is reported in the Himalayan region in India from where all the major rivers run into Bangladesh (ADAB 1992b:69). This brought home to the general public the connection between human development activities and environmental degradation.

Since this point, there have been a plethora of national and international seminars in Bangladesh and almost daily media coverage of environmental issues. A number of bilateral and multilateral donors have also taken greater interest in environmental issues in recent years. Several donors have initiated assessments of environmental issues in Bangladesh as well as re-evaluated the environmental aspects of their own development strategies in the country. Some donors have also supported projects to develop and strengthen the Department of Environment and Forests of the Government of Bangladesh and the development of "National Environment Management Action Plan" (NEMAP). By the early 1990s, concern about environmental degradation created a new basis for solidarity and organization. An environmental movement gradually evolved with its roots among the victims of environmental degradation but drawing wide ranging support from professionals, women's groups, peasants groups, the media and from some development NGOs. There was also a significant change of focus of development NGOs, which not only founded a strong lobby on

environmental issues, but also made the environment a focus in their projects and programs. By the end of the Third Plan period, then, noticeable changes in the policy environment were brought about by coordinated efforts at different levels in civil society to sensitize the state through advocacy and mobilization on women's issues as well as environmental issues.

FOURTH FIVE YEAR PLAN (1990-1995)

The changes in perception which resulted from environmental crises and international pressures led the state to begin to address the environment as an important development concern. The Government's Fourth Five Year Plan (1990-1995) describes the Government's environmental objectives as follows:

- to control and prevent pollution and degradation related to soil, water and air;
- promote environment friendly activities in the development process;
- preserve, protect and develop natural resource bases;
- strengthen the capabilities of public and private sectors to manage environmental concerns as a basic requisite for sustainable development; and
- to create people's awareness for participation in environmental promotion activities.

To further these objectives the government undertook a wide

range of initiatives including:

- creation in 1989 of a Department of Environment within a new Ministry of Environment and Forests;
- Approval in May 1992 of a National Environment Policy and Guidelines for an Environmental Action Plan;
- Initiation of work on a National Environmental Management Action Plan (NEMAP) and National Conservation Strategy; and
- Declaration that Environmental Impact Assessments should be carried out for all major development projects (GOB:1990).

In August 1989, The Government of Bangladesh created a new Ministry of Forests and Environment which incorporated the Department of Forests (previously under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests) and created a new Department of Environment. This act elevated the environment as an issue within the government with a Minister now responsible for the subject.

Increasing concern with environmental degradation in the late eighties and the failure to relate these problems to development issues led to many conferences and programs, deliberating on these issues, in both the North and the South. One of the major international events was the Earth Summit on United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 1992. Three major documents were signed at UNCED namely, 1) Agenda 21, 2) the Framework Convention on Climate and 3) the Biodiversity

Treaty. This conference gave global environmental concerns the highest international profile they had ever received. This resulted in a stronger emphasis on environmental issues in Bangladesh in both the government and non-government sectors and the creation of a National Environmental Council with the Prime Minister as the Chairperson (Huq 1993:9). The Ministry of Environment developed an Environmental Policy and National Environmental Action Plan (NEMAP) which was approved by the Cabinet and Prime Minister in April 1992.

The NEMAP constitutes a synthesis of the Government's perception of environmental issues and the actions required to address them, which has been reflected in a number of documents, including the Draft National Conservation Strategy (1991), Bangladesh Country Report for UNDP (1992), Government Environmental Policy and Action Plan (1992), Bangladesh Draft Responses to Agenda 21 (1992) and the Fourth Five Year Plan (1990-95).

The various comments and recommended approaches of the donor and NGO community contained in various published reports have also been taken into consideration in preparation of NEMAP. According to a report of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, "the current document is appropriate to the environmental issues and requirements to address these during the period 1993 to 2000. The document will be periodically reviewed over this period and modified by the government when

appropriate" (MOEF 1994a:4). Within the NEMAP, the Government of Bangladesh in association with a number of the NGOs under the aegis of -- Coalition of Environmental NGOs (CEN) and Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB) sponsored a series of 24 consultative 2 day grassroots workshops held around the country. Participants in the Workshops included a cross section of farmers, housewives, artisans and the like, along with government officers posted at the local level. Their objective was to identify, prioritize and suggest solutions to environmental problems in the local area. Fazlul Huq, the Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Forest and Environment stated that,

the National Environmental Management Action Plan (NEMAP) translates government sectoral and environmental policy, formulated in response to the current and predicted environmental scenario, into specific actions required to implement these policies. It identifies the key environmental issues presently of concern to Bangladesh and identifies actions required to halt or reduce the rate of environmental degradation, improve the natural and man made environment, conserve habitats and biodiversity, promote sustainable development and improve quality indicators of human life (Interview : May 1994).

He was of the opinion that in a government plan, for the first time, public opinion is reflected. The process of consultation with the people consisted of several grassroot level workshops around the country to identify local environmental problems and the responsibilities of the local and national government to resolve such problems. According to him,

people's participation is an important component of

NEMAP. Several workshops were held in urban and rural areas of Bangladesh which deliberated upon people's needs and these inputs were incorporated in the formulation of NEMAP (Interview : May 1994).

The NEMAP process did reflect a change in government attitude towards civil society. Rather than completely repressing civil society, as has been the practice earlier, the government began actively working with NGOs, co-opting their viewpoints and providing opportunity to the grassroots to express their opinions in the workshops that were held. This may be attributed to a number of factors -- the growth of a strong lobby on environmental issues among the actors in civil society, donor pressure and the new democratic regime. Although environmental concerns achieved a higher public profile in NEMAP, the question still remains whether this will bring people's participation to national environmental planning. It may be argued that stated government concerns do not necessarily indicate real commitment, as is evident from the government programs discussed later.

The sectoral action plan of the NEMAP focuses on the following sectors: 1) water resources, 2) agriculture, 3) energy, 4) housing and urban infrastructure 5) health, sanitation and population 6) transport and communications 7) coastal and marine resources management 8) land resources 9) industry 10) fisheries and livestock 11) forestry, wildlife and biodiversity 12) education and awareness 13) global

international issues (MOEF 1994a:6). Huq observed that,

the NEMAP has been prepared largely upon a sectoral basis primarily because the implementation will best be achieved through existing government institutions. For each sectoral component of NEMAP, the actions required have been developed from an understanding of relevant policies and environmental issues (Interview : May 1994).

While both the Government of Bangladesh and donors operate within largely sectoral frameworks in their environmental policies and actions, as reflected in NEMAP and earlier documents of the Government of Bangladesh, a broader analysis of the environmental situation in Bangladesh indicates that more integrative strategies are required for sustainable development in the country. There is abundant evidence that development projects in the past which were considered within sectoral frameworks in which interrelationships among different sectors or issue areas were ignored often had adverse effects on ecological processes, genetic diversity and sustainable resource use and proved to be dismal failures (for example, flood control projects). In NEMAP there is inadequate consideration of the interconnections of the issues of gender, class and environmental concerns. In its sectoral approach, each issue area has been focused on without much consideration of how it will impact on different social groups and classes.

The "mainstreaming women in national development" approach was taken up in the Fourth Five Year Plan. Hosne Ara Kashem, Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Women's Affairs

observed that,

the integration of women into the mainstream of development became an explicit objective for the first time in the Fourth Five Year Plan (1990-95). The development objectives and strategies as well as policies with regard to women were placed within the context of the macro economic framework of the plan and women were visualized as distinct target groups both as agents and as beneficiaries in all sectors of the economy (Interview: May 1994).

According to the report of the Task Forces, the general strategy in the plan was to undertake sectoral/multi-sectoral programs within the macro framework of the plan. Special thrust was to be given in the sectors such as agriculture, industries and trade, services, environment and natural resources, education, health and family planning. The broad objectives of these sectors were framed keeping in mind the necessity of extensive participation by women in these sectors (Task Force 1991:333). The main objectives of WID in the Fourth Five Year Plan were outlined as follows:

- 1) To integrate women in mainstream economic activities so as to reduce gradually the gender disparity in all socio-economic spheres;
- 2) To increase women's participation in public sector decision making at both national and local levels;
- 3) To raise the productivity and income opportunities of the female labor force through skill development and training;
- 4) To reduce population growth at a faster rate through the enhancement of the socio-economic status of women;

- 5) To reduce substantially the male/female literacy gap;
- 6) To raise female nutritional levels and improve the provision of health services to women;
- 7) To enhance the participation of women in nutrition-based agriculture and maintenance of an ecological balance;
- 8) To reduce substantially infant and maternal mortality rates;
- 9) To ensure participation of the poorer fifty percent of women in the development process more effectively (MOWCA 1995:1-2).

In the Fourth Plan period, focal points for women's development were set up in 31 Ministries and agencies, which included agriculture, fisheries and livestock, local government/rural development cooperatives, forestry and environment, relief and rehabilitation, industry, social welfare, education, health and family welfare (MOWCA 1995:1). The Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs acted as lead focal point at national and international levels. The focal points were operating at the level of Deputy Secretary and they were mostly located in the planning cells of the relevant Ministries. According to Kashem,

The main functions of these focal points are to bring about a common understanding of WID issues in project formulation and implementation, to share experiences about the handling of programs, to prepare gender-based appraisal procedures, checklists and

monitoring/evaluation indicators which can be used to integrate women's concerns in sectoral planning; to compile and update lists of resource institutions, individuals and documentation on WID in different sectors; and to prepare handbooks for Field Officers in charge of handling WID programs (Interview: May 1994).

However, this system did not have any significant impact. The hierarchical structure in the government bureaucracy created hindrances in the smooth functioning of this system. According to an official of the Ministry of Women's Affairs who wished to remain anonymous, "the limited influence of Women Affairs Department in relation to other Ministries hampers the effectiveness of the focal points" (personal communication : May 1994).

In spite of the official rhetoric of "mainstreaming" and constitutional commitment to women's equality, the plan indicated a further stringency in allocating priorities to women. In terms of budgetary allocations in the Fourth Five Year Plan, it is only the social sectors (i.e., education, health, social welfare, women's affairs, and family planning) that contain significant expenditures aimed at women. Social sectors as such received a small percentage of the total development budget: between 10 and 12 percent in the First, Second and Third Five Year Plans and approximately 14 percent in the Fourth Five Year Plan (UNDP 1992:49). In the Fourth Five Year Plan, 2.6 percent of public expenditure was allocated to education, 6 percent to health, 0.3 percent to

social welfare, 0.2 percent to women's affairs and 4 percent to family planning. Primary fiscal emphasis in the Plan was on agriculture and irrigation (27 per cent), energy and natural resources (21 per cent) and transport and communication (17 per cent) (N.Ahmad 1992a:19). Looking at the budgetary allocation of the Government of Bangladesh to development for women, it is apparent that women are addressed primarily within the context of the family and reproduction. Development planning efforts thus still fail to recognize fully women's actual and potential contribution to the development process or the effect of the development process on them. Rounaq Jahan observes,

compared to the previous plans, the Fourth plan made a greater effort to mainstream gender issues in the discussion of the general as well as sectoral chapters of the plan document. But it did not establish any time bound quantitative target to achieve gender equality, nor did it elaborate the institutional mechanisms and financial arrangements needed to implement the strategies identified in the plan (Jahan 1995:70).

The strategies outlined by the Government of Bangladesh towards integrating women's issues in the mainstream of the Fourth plan failed to conceptualize the basis of the deprivation of women, their marginalization and the significance of integrating them into the development process. Although the mainstreaming approach was taken up, in effect, the effort to mainstream gender in the Fourth Five Year Plan merely produced a cursory mention of women as benefitting from

improvements alongside men, in whatever sector. According to Meghna Guhathakurta,

mainstreaming was interpreted in a reductive way in Fourth Five Year Plan leading to the mere rhetorical inclusion of women across all policy sectors, rather than a rethinking of broad policies and a conceptual challenge to the overall framework of development planning (Interview; May 1994).

Although the Ministry was empowered to formulate policies and programs for the development of women, it followed isolated policies and programs and had no comprehensive plan of action. The programs for women in the Fourth Five Year Plan appeared to persist with the traditional themes -- training, credit, infrastructure projects -- which constrained earlier Plan efforts. Apparently, the Plan remained oblivious to the work done by activists, researchers and planners who prioritized integration of women in the mainstreaming of the development process. Thus the Fourth Five Year Plan failed to break out of the conceptual sterility on the issue of women in development which informed earlier Plan documents.

Dealing with women in isolation rather than as part of the mainstream in development programs has often resulted in treating the symptoms rather than the underlying causes of women's inequality in the country. Top-down theories of planned change have consistently failed to reach poor women as the most marginalized sectors of society. This has facilitated the prevalence of gender and class disparities in development

and the gender and class differential impact of development programs. Also, the fact that poor women, as the most disadvantaged, feel the greatest effects of environmental degradation, is ignored and overlooked in the planning exercise. So we see that though in reality there is a relationship between social inequities, environmental stress and gender concerns, no interlinkage is made between these issues by the government, neither is their impact taken into consideration in chalking out state plans and programs.

A critical review of the policy documents reveals a "continuing trend in gender differentiation in the society, the economy and the polity" (Jahan 1989). It also points to a systematic bias towards women's stereotypical role in society as daughter, wife and mother. Hamida Hossain observes,

notwithstanding the rhetoric of mainstreaming, the Fourth Five Year Plan has reflected a traditional patriarchal bias for the integrative aspects of the family and the complementarity of women's roles which is likely to submerge the question of equity within the family and utilize the potential of female labor (Hossain 1991:77).

Women have seldom been visualized as partners in, or agents of change in development (Chowdhury 1992:20). There is still a bias towards the welfare approach which takes women as passive consumers of development and not as active partners in progress. Also many donor agencies in directing their assistance to women often presuppose their role as passive recipients of aid rather than regarding them as active agents

and beneficiaries of change. Women are viewed more as objects than as subjects of development planning.

In preparing a "Draft National Policy and Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women in Bangladesh" Sirajuddin Ahmed, Joint Secretary and Project Director for strengthening of planning capability of the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs observes,

The Ministry of Women's Affairs followed isolated policies and programs and no comprehensive plan of action has yet been prepared. The Second and Third Five Year Plan included women's issues, but no integrated policies and programs were adopted. The Fourth Five Year Plan for the first time incorporated the concept of women in development into the macro as well as micro framework for multi-sectoral thrust and to bring women into the mainstream of development. Still, the national policies and plan of actions were not depicted fully in the plan document. It was an isolated attempt to identify some of the problems and recommended actions to be taken. In order to bring women into the mainstream of development the Ministry will require a concrete national policy and action plan for the achievement of the objectives -- equality, development and peace (S. Ahmed, 1995:5).

Ahmed's observation reveals that even within the government there are criticisms concerning the inadequacies of national plans and policies.

In the Five Year Plans of the government of Bangladesh, there are general declarations about improving the situation of women and some statements of intent, which make particular mention of women's participation and their importance to national development. These policy insights have, however, not been made fully operational. Overall, women's concerns are

reflected in specific projects only. In its Third and Fourth Plans, the Government of Bangladesh incorporated specific projects budgeted for women in particular sectors. The emphasis in the plans were on allocations specific to women's programs, which tend to be quantitatively insignificant. Projects have focused mainly on poverty alleviation and economic self-reliance through the provision of services and means of income generation, e.g. provision of credit and skill training, necessary to meet the basic survival needs of rural poor women (UNDP 1994:42). The project approach provided no indication that the condition of women would be improved within the framework of the plan. Though poverty related factors are the major barriers to women's development in Bangladesh, their elimination should not be considered a panacea for all problems. In a country where the majority of poor rural households are highly reliant on the natural resource base for their livelihood, the process of environmental degradation and the depletion of common property resources has a major impact on the people, especially poor rural women. Eliminating the gender/class differential impact of environmental degradation is crucial to the success of any development plan or program in the country. However, these important linkages and pertinent issues have been so far ignored in the development plans of the country.

In both the Ministry of Forest and Environment and in the

Ministry of Women's Affairs, women are perceived as skilful environmental managers whose knowledge and way of working can be a valuable asset at the project level. There are attempts to consider women's role in conservation strategies and it is assumed that if women are integrated in such conservation projects or environmental programs, the gender differential impact of environmental degradation will be addressed. As Hosne Ara Kashem said, "the government is working with the NGOs to create environmental awareness. Such environmental issues as tree plantation, sanitation, use of smokeless stove are encouraged by the government within overall women development programs" (Interview : May 1994). Similarly, Fazlul Huq of the Ministry of Forest and Environment said, "although there is a gender gap in development, the government is increasingly trying to incorporate women in all spheres". He further stated that "even in environmental policy, women are given increasing importance". He was of the opinion that "women have a very important role in rural sanitation, tree plantation, cattle rearing, poultry raising and other such activities" (Interview : May 1994). However, this view of women can in practice reinforce the perception that women are natural environmental carers. Instead, women's relationship with the environment should be perceived in terms of their material reality in how environmental degradation is a livelihood crisis for them. This aspect has been totally

neglected in both government development plans and the programs that have been designed specially for women.

The whole concept of the planning process is based on growth of capital rather than on human resources. There has been a tendency to emphasize material resources, ignoring the real actors in development, i.e., people. As Meghna Guhathakurta observes,

preoccupied with generating the scarce factor -- capital -- from whatever source at whatever expense, we in Bangladesh have absolutely disregarded the abundant factor -- people, particularly the vast majority of them who remain poor and fail to mobilize their latent capacity as the factor of production and development (Interview: May 1994).

We cannot overlook the fact that development must cater to the needs of the people to be sustainable.

The economic and social imbalance created by decades of bureaucratic exercises in planning has favored the growth of inequalities and failed to respond to people's needs. This has led to a growing divide between the rich and the poor, urban and rural, men and women. The growing divide between the rich and the poor is illustrated in a study by Eirik Jansen. According to his findings, the distribution of income shows that the top twenty percent of the population take forty percent of national income, while the bottom twenty percent of the population take only seven percent. Jansen further observes that over the years, the income distribution has

become skewed in favor of the higher income group (Jansen 1991:96). Urban rural disparity in maternal mortality rate and civilian labor force may be seen in Table 3 and 4, while gender disparity is apparent in the indicators in Tables 2, 4, 5 and 6. It is wishful thinking to imagine that marginal programs can overcome the impact of resultant poverty, landlessness and social conflicts. What is needed is a radically new agenda which will be sensitive to poverty, gender, class and the environment and take into account the interconnections among them while formulating strategies and policies for sustainable development. However, the government's approach continues to remain additive, that is, there is a tendency to add the issues on to existing policies. Nilufar Ahmad of Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad observes,

Because of donor pressures, state institutions just add women or environment in its programs. There is no serious awareness or effort for linkage of these issues on the part of the state. State institutions produce project proposals within the conventional economic model of development and then add environment or women at the end, just like an appendix. They do not try to understand the peculiar and specific needs of the project beneficiaries or involve them in any way in project design. If there has to be a serious linkage then there is a need to take an integrated and holistic approach when designing projects, interlinking the issues of gender, class, environment and people as a whole (Interview:May 1994).

Clearly, the Government's approach does not go to the roots of the crisis or try to understand people's lives and living conditions. As discussed earlier, the state's approach stresses basically the institutional nature of the problem.

State policy reflects a women and environment perspective which simply "adds on" gender, class or environmental concerns without questioning the underlying assumptions of development. It does not call for transformations or restructuring, but merely conceives of the solutions as an improvement or addition to the prevailing order. While the Five Year Plans provide macro evidence of this failing, let us make this argument by looking at government policies and programs in specific gender and environmental issue areas.

SELECTED GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS ON GENDER AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE AREAS

In this section I focus on one of the major areas of governmental interventions on gender issues -- family planning and population control. This issue area is chosen because not only is it one of the major areas of government intervention, it is also linked with environmental degradation in a negative way which is contrary to the arguments of this thesis. Another point of consideration is that population control programs of the Government have been the focus of severe criticisms and resistance by women's organizations, NGOs and grassroots groups, which clearly illustrates the nature of responses in civil society in the country to unsustainable government programs. Three other areas of focus here are the government's social forestry programs, the IDA financed shrimp cultivation

project and government's water resource management under the Flood Action Plan (FAP). Although the shrimp cultivation project is not a government project, it is selected for study because of the protests in civil society to such an environmentally destructive project and the lack of government response to such protests. These programs and projects are found to have adverse effects on ecological processes, genetic diversity and sustainable resource use. They also contribute to the destruction of common property resources, which are of particular importance to the poor majority in the country. In many cases, there also has been a differential impact on women and other marginalized groups in society. These case studies clearly illustrate that inadequate consideration is given to the interconnections of gender, class and environmental concerns before the design and implementation of such projects.

a) FAMILY PLANNING AND POPULATION CONTROL

Population control is one of the most "aid intensive" sectors in Bangladesh's annual development budgets. Large amounts of resources are devoted to the program, which is a reflection of the priority that donors attach to it as seen in the Five Year Plans. Population control became a priority for the Government of Bangladesh in 1975, when pressure from the donor community resulted in the adoption of a target based population policy. Women have been targeted by government

programs to use contraception in order to help achieve the official objective of fertility reduction. According to the National Report of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs,

The government with the support of the donor agencies has taken numerous measures to reduce fertility rate. All possible measures are taken to make available to the population a wide variety of choices in contraceptive methods. Contraceptive prevalence in the population at large is significant to have a marked impact on fertility levels. Fertility appears to have declined from a rate of about 6.3 children born to married women in 1975 to 4.33 in 1990 (MOWCA 1995:15).

With increasing international attention to environmental issues, the rationale for population control has expanded over the years to include environmental protection. Population growth has increasingly been identified as a primary cause of environmental destruction. The view that population growth is the main cause for continued poverty and environmental degradation may be seen in the following quotation from the report of UNFPA The State of World Population 1990,

For any given type of technology, for any given level of consumption or waste, for any given level of poverty or inequality, the more people there are the greater the impact on the environment (UNFPA 1990:10).

The environment has thus become an issue to justify depopulation. Even the message of the World Population Day in July 1991 was that poverty and population growth combine for environmental degradation. On the occasion of this day, Dr Nafis Sadik, Executive Director of UNFPA stated,

rapid population growth, with mounting poverty, alarming depletion of natural resources, damage to the environment, migratory pressures and unmet needs in education, health, employment and housing threaten the present and future quality of life on our planet (quoted in Akhter 1992:100).

The view that rapid population growth is responsible for the country's poverty and environmental degradation became entrenched and encouraged the government to invest a lot of money in population control efforts. Although the UNFPA recognizes that "the largest share of the resources used and waste created, is the responsibility of the 'top billion' people, those in the industrialized countries", the main policy to halt the threatening environmental trends is the proposal to halt population growth. This means, that not the rich, who have caused the situation as it is, have to do something, but the poor, living in the exploited countries of the South, have to take the responsibility on their shoulders.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, women's development in Bangladesh was advocated by the donors largely as a means to achieve population control -- education, skills, training, jobs and credit were to be made available to women so that their fertility would be reduced. Three major programs were launched by the Government of Bangladesh, namely the Women's Vocational Training for Population Activities Project (WVTPA), Rural Mother's Centers for Population Activities (RMCPA) and Women's Cooperative for Population Activities (WCPA) (DWA

1995:8). These programs were run by the Government of Bangladesh with a dual aim of combating a high population growth rate and the extremely disadvantaged situation of women in society. The method followed was to mobilize rural women in income generating activities as well as to expose them to family planning. The three women's programs were more or less simultaneously started in July 1975 and have been implemented in three Five Year plan periods: 1975-1980 (FFYP), 1980-1985 (SFYP) and 1985-1990 (TFYP). All the programs were continued in the Fourth Five Year Plan (1990-1995) period.

Here I focus on one of these major women's programs -- the Women's Vocational Training for Population Activities Project (WVTPA). The overall objective of the project is to raise the socio-economic status of women of low income families by making them independent and economically self reliant. This is done in the project through enabling women to enter into this productive labor force by way of acquiring various income generating skills. Credit activities are also given emphasis during the project period. The women are motivated to accept small family norms as part of the individual strategy towards self-reliance. It is assumed that a rise in income of women will have a positive effect on the population control activities of the government.

During the First Plan period, a total of 3,401 rural women were given vocational training and a total of 54,033

family planning acceptors were recruited. During the Second Plan period, a total of 12,840 women received vocational training and 1,38,090 family planning acceptors were recruited. During the Third Plan period, 34,240 rural women were given vocational training and 273,320 family planning acceptors were recruited (DWA 1995:8). In the Fourth phase of the project (1990-1995), the target was fixed to provide vocational training on income generating activities to 17,798 women in different handicrafts, such as sewing, weaving, poultry raising, bakery, embroidery, block printing, screen printing, spice grinding, computer literacy and electronics assembling and repairing. Up to June 1995, 13,508 women received training in the above mentioned crafts (DWA 1995:11). The target was set in the Fourth Plan to raise contraceptive usage to above 60 percent in the project areas by 1996 (ibid 1995:9). The final evaluation report of the Fourth plan period was not available during the writing of this thesis.

I visited the center of one WTPA project in Sarishabari Thana of Jamalpur district in May 1994, where rural unemployed, poor, and landless women of the age group 13-30 years were identified as the target beneficiaries for the project. The government has similar projects in 40 thanas in the Fourth phase (1990-1996) of the project. Despite past reviews and evaluations by various agencies for moving into areas of intermediate and high technology skills, I observed

that training for income-generating activities were predominantly given in tailoring, weaving, embroidery, wool and lace knitting, leather and wooden crafts, batik and block printing, poultry raising, bakery and confectionery in the WVTPA project in Sarisabari thana.

In these programs, women who accepted the use of contraceptives, either oral or injected, could have access to credit and other benefits, while non-acceptors were excluded. This kind of incentive system emphasizes contraceptive acceptance and sterilization, rather than providing equal support to methods appropriate to the needs and life cycles of clients. This population control program is target driven without consideration of the people's choices or needs. It treats women's development as secondary to population goals. It offers very little in the way of health support services, and does not monitor the side effects of contraceptive drugs. Another significant factor is that the weight of such population control policies of the Government falls disproportionately on women. Women are targeted to shoulder the full responsibility of family planning and population control, while men share no such responsibility. Women have to bear disproportionately the burden of contraception imposed by the patriarchal bias of these population control programs. It seems that these "women development" projects have done little to strengthen the independence of women or deal with the real

issues of impoverishment and marginalization. Rather, these population control programs manage to coerce poor women into contraceptive acceptance through various incentives (food, work, clothing).

There has been considerable criticism of government programs, in line with the arguments of this thesis, particularly in the mid eighties, by the women's movement, academics and some development workers for being incentive-oriented and targeted specifically at women, evading the issue of men's responsibility for fertility control and ignoring the interlinkage of class and gender (Akhter 1986, Hartmann 1987, Gillespie 1991, Guhathakurta 1994).

A major concern expressed by women's groups and academics in Bangladesh is that most of the "women's development" programs supported by the government and donors focus solely on women's reproductive roles, to the detriment of their economic and social roles. This has led to population control approaches which target women as "contraceptive acceptors" and the use of strategies which can be abusive to basic human rights. Peter Gillespie of Interpares, Canada, observes,

posing as projects concerned with women's empowerment and needs for greater choices, population control projects have been merely distributing contraceptives in Bangladesh. They rarely offer health support services or monitor the side effects of contraceptive drugs (Gillespie 1994:18).

Gillespie argues that it is essential to distinguish between

a family planning approach and the approach embodied in a population control strategy. A family planning approach places fertility regulation in the context of a maternal/child health strategy and offers a variety of contraceptives according to the needs, informed choices and lifestyles of clients. A family planning approach acknowledges that fertility reduction is not simply a matter of distribution of contraceptives, but also requires improvements in the social, health, educational and economic contexts of families. He observed that "the strategy practiced by the Government of Bangladesh has been very much a population control approach. Population control strategies, by contrast, are based on fertility regulation targets set by national governments and have little to do with the needs and desires of individuals" (Interview: August 1994). Population control programs rely on coercion to ensure that national targets are met and use a range of incentives and disincentives to promote sterilization or other long term methods of contraception. According to a report of Norwegian Agency for Development (NORAD), such programs have not embodied an authentic maternal/child health care component (NORAD 1986:145).

Population control strategies have led to serious abuses of basic human rights. The fact that such strategies have targeted women in the absence of informed consent and often with questionable interventions poses a direct contradiction

to the values and ethos supposedly embodied in women and development programing. Janice Jiggins observes,

narrowly conceived, target driven policies that seek to bring about population control through technical fixes lend themselves to coercive, authoritarian application that are disrespectful of human rights and of the principles of voluntarism and informed choice that lie at the heart of family planning movement By targeting women as the instrument for the achievement of state policy, target driven policies diminish rather than augment women's capacity to make decisions in their own interest (Jiggins 1994:172).

Also, there are serious reservations related to the types of contraceptive drugs and devices promoted in the program. Injectable contraceptives such as Noristeret and Depo Provera have been known to cause side effects (Hartmann 1987). As Farida Akhter of UBINIG observes,

women receive the contraceptives along with all the side effects associated with them. They are hardly asked which kind of contraceptive they need. They are not given any information of the side effects. The family planning workers are often afraid that if they give information to women then they cannot fulfill the targets (Akhter 1992:32).

Thus population control measures are in no way gender sensitive or environment sensitive but are coercive measures. Instead of offering women choices, they diminish choice. The aim of the program is still to control the fertility of women rather than to create the conditions under which women can control their own fertility. Betsy Hartmann challenges the view that contraceptive led family planning is the one big easy option for resolving population control and environmental

problems in conditions of poverty and structural exploitation, the conventional population paradigm is deeply antithetical to the rights of women and poor communities, since it fails to recognize the fundamental power relationships at the root of gender and class oppression (Hartmann 1993:24).

Similarly, Najma Siddique of Jahangir Nagar University, in criticizing this approach of donors to population control policies observes;

Their view of problems of development rarely consider the different position and needs of women. Usually, the focus on women has to do with women's roles as mothers, rather than as individuals in society. As a result, the projects which are designated, end up reinforcing rather than removing patriarchy. For instance, most foreign aid earmarked for 'women' is channeled into family planning. The aim is simply to find a simple solution to population growth, not to improve women's status (Siddique 1992:31-32).

Also, survey after survey backed by increasingly vociferous critiques by the community of non-governmental organizations showed that the abuses of targets and incentives are very much in force in population control approaches of the government. Voluntary, informed consent and client choice of method were revealed as largely a fiction. Many individual cases have been documented of client's use of methods that were medically contraindicated (Jiggins 1994:169).

The thesis that overpopulation is one of the main causes of poverty or environmental degradation has also been challenged by several scholars (Mies 1993, Akhter 1992, Hartmann 1987, 1993). They argue that this line of thinking

tends to divert attention away from more crucial factors underlying poverty and environmental degradation, for example, unequal distribution of resources, degradation of land, deforestation, global warming or destruction of the ozone layer. As Maria Mies writes,

environmental threats are almost universally attributed to one cause, namely population growth. There is no mention of the exploitative and colonial world system we are living in, no mention of the prevailing development paradigm or of the wasteful production and consumption patterns of the industrialized societies which are producing most of the environmental destruction (Mies 1993:2).

Similarly, Hartmann questions the assumptions of UNFPA,

The view of improving women's status as a means to an end (the reduction of population growth and hence poverty and environmental degradation), rather than as a laudable end in and of itself objectifies women, targeting their wombs and turning them into the mechanical components of yet another exercise in misconceived social engineering. The women presented in the triangle are also an undifferentiated mass. There is little recognition, for example of the profound differences between how a peasant woman relates to the environment and a city dweller. Moreover, within both those categories one finds important class differentiations which affect resource use (Hartmann 1993:11).

Farida Akhter observes that in recent years there have been shifts in the depopulation strategy which is increasingly beginning to relate ecology and environmental concerns to population control,

the latest fashionable blame on population is environmental degradation. Ecologists and environmentalists are raising alarm that the planet earth is losing the carrying capacity, it cannot sustain so many people. There is an extreme pressure on the natural resources. It is very easy then to say that it is the

increasing number of people in the Third World who are responsible for the environmental degradation of the planet. Again the solution is reduced population growth (Akhter 1992:99).

The international donor community of bilateral and multilateral agencies that had been supporting Bangladesh's population policies became alarmed at the increasingly negative reports and feminist and NGO critiques. Eventually, a number of donors withdrew their support² for the population policy altogether or demanded substantial revisions and assurances that the worst features of the existing program would be abandoned (Jiggins 1994:169). In some cases as a result of this controversy, some donors withdrew funds.

Since then a different approach to population control has been followed, with greater emphasis on maternal and child health and integrated service delivery. Population control or family planning programs have been subsumed under family welfare, maternal and pre- and post-natal health care. Income generation has been linked to family planning in order to increase contraceptive use among poor rural women. However, this is not a profound transformation by any means. The assumption still remains that population growth is the major cause of poverty, underdevelopment and environmental degradation. Such population control strategies are indifferent to class and gender differential impact and are insensitive to the linkages between gender and class to

environmental concerns in the country. Their emphasis on population control as causing environmental degradation is solely a method of justifying coercive depopulating strategies. Despite the challenges and criticisms, population control policies are still being vigorously promoted and government projects on family planning and population control still form a major part of the national goals.

Thus, it may be argued that government programs treat gender as an additive category to be added onto existing ones, with women as a special target group. The programs are essentially couched in welfare terms. This approach emphasizes the provision of "basic" goods and services. It may be concluded that in Bangladesh, the gender dimension of development and policy making has received inadequate attention in the country. Policy makers have addressed themselves to questions of sectoral development, but they have yet to respond adequately to specific questions of gender and gender differential needs. Improving the position of women is not merely a question of supplying more resources to them, but a much broader issue of sustainable gender sensitive development. Women's development not only means provisions of some basic needs, but also emancipation from exploitation, creation of self awareness, social justice and personal autonomy which is lacking in governmental programs. The government programs on population control and family planning

concentrate on providing health and family planning infrastructure. Such interventions do not address the structural constraints faced by women, for example, patriarchal relations and policies of gender discrimination which are still pervasive in every strata of society in Bangladesh. Nor does it address the important interconnections of gender, class and environment in sustainable development and how they have an impact on one another.

It may be argued that gender gaps in development cannot be understood or resolved in a piecemeal manner through the initiation of isolated projects and programs. They have to be addressed in a holistic manner in which fundamental questions have to be posed about the basis of women's deprivation and discrimination and about gender differential impact of development policies and programs. In such an approach the important consideration of class and women's relation to the environment has to be addressed. A different kind of a definition of mainstreaming women has to be formulated which is far removed from any official interpretation of the WID concern. Such a definition should be the one in which marginalized women can define through their participation both the ends and means of a development, which is relevant to serve their needs. This approach can draw strength from women's movements and the many protest movements in which women in the country have participated to articulate their

demands and to protest against oppression. Both donors and government give emphasis to the need to bring women into the mainstream of development. Yet there is little recognition that bringing women into the mainstream, seriously considered, means changing the nature of the mainstream.

b) GOVERNMENT SOCIAL FORESTRY PROGRAMS

Deforestation and the loss of biodiversity and wildlife is an urgent environmental issue for Bangladesh. A study by Michael Howard on Asia's environmental crisis reports that logging has reduced forest cover in Bangladesh to less than 16 percent of the total land area (Howard 1993:5). It also notes that deforestation in inland areas and widespread destruction of mangroves along the coasts has had a serious impact on wildlife in the country (ibid:6). Severe deforestation has taken place in the country in Chittagong Hill Tracts, Cox's Bazar, Chittagong, Tangail, Gazipur and in all forest areas. Common property resources such as the sal (*shorea robusta*) forest area in Tangail and Gazipur districts in Northern Bangladesh have been severely degraded due to deforestation (World Bank 1992) and conversion of forest lands to other uses (Lai 1992:46). In hill areas too, in South and South Eastern Bangladesh, large areas of forest have been replaced by pineapple, rubber or other cash crops (Ahmed 1993:5).

Uncontrolled depletion of forest resources in the country and replacement by commercial forest stands cause not only the

loss of forests, but lead to increased soil erosion, increased possibility of flash flooding and diminishing biodiversity. Natural sal forests provide local villagers with products such as wild yams, honey, leaves, medicinal plants, wild tubers and a variety of fuel resources (Lai 1992:48, Khan et al. 1991:18). Deforestation has a direct bearing on the availability of domestic fuel and fodder as well as other products used within the household for subsistence needs. Decreasing supplies of fuel effect not only the time required for gathering fuelwood over greater distances but several other factors such as the time spent on cooking, household nutrition and health and indoor air pollution caused by the replacement of traditional fuels with ones which create more pollution. Women are differentially affected as these jobs are generally taken care of by them. The majority of rural women depend on forests not only for meeting their subsistence needs, but also for income and employment. A significant implication of deforestation, particularly in certain areas, is the scarcity of forest products used for income generation. Deforestation also leads to severe soil erosion causing river siltation and resulting in floods and human misery which has a gender differential impact (N.Ahmad 1992:19).

As reflected in policy documents (Fourth Five Year Plan 1990-1995), one of the prime concerns of the Government of Bangladesh appears to be to protect the remnants of the

natural forest and afforest the degraded land in the country.³ In spite of these stated development goals in national plans, the projects and programs of the government often have not been successful in fulfilling this objective. Government social forestry projects continue to rely on centralized project design and species selection, with very little participation or input from local villagers, particularly women.

Here I focus on the "Thana Afforestation and Nursery Development Project" of the Government of Bangladesh. This project, financed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), is an experiment on social forestry by the Government of Bangladesh and covers all districts of Bangladesh except greater Chittagong Hill Tracts. I visited a project area in Kaliakoir upazilla in Gazipur district of Bangladesh in May 1994. The primary objective of the project is,

to arrest depletion of the tree resources of the country in general and the forest of central and northern region in particular. These objectives are sought to be achieved by development of the resource base through enrichment planting of the depleted sal forest and as well as bringing all available, suitable lands in the countryside, homestead land, compounds of community buildings, marginal fallow and wasteland including the marginal strip lands by the sides of roads, railways and embankments under tree cover with the active participation of the people (MOEF 1995:1).

The government afforestation project includes woodlot (fresh plantation of softwood trees for firewood), agroforestry and

strip plantation. The main selections for woodlot that have been replacing the natural stands in the sal forest areas in Madhupur, Sreepur and Kaliakoir are Eucalyptus, Camaldunesis, Acacia Mangium and Auriculaeformis (Gain 1992b:19). According to the findings of a study by Lai in some areas of Mirzapur and Kaliakoir upazilas, sal forest coppices have been uprooted and replaced with eucalyptus "block fuelwood" plantations to meet targets established by the ADB financed Thana Afforestation Project (1994:48). The Forest Department of the Government of Bangladesh is the executing agency for establishing woodlot plantation in the Madhupur Tract and elsewhere in the country as well as for agroforestry. S.M.Alauddin, Senior Research Officer of the Forest Department, when asked about people's responses to and degree of participation in species selection of the government woodlot plantation, observed that, "the majority of the local people now prefer fast growing species and Eucalyptus is an appropriate choice for woodlot plantation" (Interview:June 1994).

Investments by governments, donor agencies and multinational corporations are directly encouraging communities to shift land use from community controlled, "subsistence" activities to raising cash crops. It appeared to me during my field visit that social forestry promoted by government and international agencies involves the planting of

commercial trees like eucalyptus, which provide profits mainly for rich farmers, while local people prefer mixed forests and trees whose leaves, roots, bark, fruit and nuts may be as useful to them as the lumber itself. Said one local villager "the local influential people want trees for profit, we want trees for people" (Interview : Kalimuddin, May 1994). In the sal forest areas, the poor depend on tree products for their fuel needs and they also collect medicinal plants and herbs from the forest. Besides sal, several other tree varieties like amloki, ajuli, boyra, hartaki, gamar, chapalish, arjun and palash are found in the sal forest. These trees, their leaves, fruits, seeds and gum, have tremendous economic value to the forest fringe population. The planting of "alien" trees in place of natural forests has negative consequences for women, tribal and other marginalized and poor people who are dependent on these for various purposes. A local woman in Kaliakoir upazilla told me that "not only the soil pattern is changing fast where there is monoculture plantation with "alien" trees, but also the woodlot plots are increasingly becoming devoid of wildlife" (Interview, Ayesha Begum : May 1994).

There are several studies on the negative effects of monoculture plantation primarily with exotic varieties, such as Eucalyptus, Acacia and Auriculae which support this argument. Eucalyptus, abundantly planted in Bangladesh for

woodlot, is reported to be destructive to the ecosystem. It is a fast growing species which matures in ten years or less, at an even height and age for easy harvesting. But fast growing species have high demand for soil nutrients and water. Thus plantation soils can quickly loose fertility. According to Hira Jhamtani and Debbie Ferren,

an Eucalyptus tree consume water three times more than a local tree thus causing the water table going down. The leaves of this tree do not rot and therefore, do not help in creating biomass in the soil as created by the leaves of sal and other trees in the sal forest. Monoculture plantations are also vulnerable to disease and insect damage and require extensive applications of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers. This leads to an irreversible loss of plants, insects and animal diversity and destruction of forest ecological systems (Jhamtani and Ferren 1994:174).

Several studies document that monoculture plantation results in loss of biodiversity. In contrast, mixed plantation, incorporating indigenous tree species preserve biodiversity and continues to meet the multiple needs of the local population (Gain 1992b:19). In this context it may be mentioned that the Bangladesh government's forest policies or reforestation schemes have given low priority to indigenous trees like sal, favoring instead exotic species like eucalyptus, which provide only a very narrow range of products, i.e. fuel, wood and poles. Such forestry projects often displace local people from areas that had provided a number of products for them. The government policies have thus been insensitive to the needs of the local people.

A socio-economic survey carried out by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) in 1993 reveals that in the "Thana Afforestation and Nursery Development Project", the beneficiary groups are not being involved in the planning and in some cases even at the plantation stages (FAO 1993). Similarly, according to an evaluation of the progress of the activities of the project by the United Nations Development Project (UNDP), 1992, the nature and extent of participation by prospective beneficiaries in afforestation activities has often been limited. It reports that there has been a lack of clarity and follow up regarding benefit sharing agreements, and in some cases beneficiary groups have not been properly organized. The target population -- the rural underprivileged (landless laborers, marginal farmers and women) -- have not been included to the full extent possible in many of the strip plantation groups. According to the report,

The decision making role of beneficiaries in strip plantation, woodlots and agroforestry components has been minimal because of a top-down managerial approach of the government project. Although, the Forest Department has widened the scope of its social forestry activities, it has yet to engage in most cases rural people as partners in planting, managing and benefiting from trees. Local people are often unaware of the aims of strip tree plantation or benefits to be derived from participating in this activity (UNDP 1992).

Field level experience shows that the Forest Department is more inclined to assess the success of social forestry programs by the number of saplings planted and survived rather

than by the extent, quality and sustainability of the people's participation at the grassroots level in the whole process. M.A.Alim in his study on social forestry in Bangladesh observes,

Forest Department has failed to organize and involve the people in the whole process and the very concept and philosophy of peoples' active and sustained participation is in jeopardy. The Forest Department with its traditional custodial approach to forestry management is proving inadequate and inappropriate to address the core issues at the grassroots level which is integration with the people conceptually and locationally (Alim 1995:142-143).

Alim's observation clearly illustrates the top down statist approach of the Forest Department. The Forest Department appeared to be unwilling to consider the joint (Forest Department-Beneficiary Group) management of natural degraded stands (sal). This is indicated by its enrichment/woodlot plantation program which provides little future for participants. Sustainable protection of natural stands could have been achieved through resident groups benefitting from the improvement of these stands and a share in the benefits derived. Protection of natural stands would have also allowed for the maintenance of a greater degree of biodiversity.

The land tenure situation is highly complex in many of the places designated for the woodlot and agroforestry components. There are in many cases long-standing community and individual claims to such sites, and a number of often conflicting land laws, regulations and policies apply to this

situation. Abdur Rahim, a local villager in Kaliakoir upazila, alleged that there are adverse social implications in the forest area due to government woodlot projects: "Woodlot does not provide tenurial rights and most of those who worked as laborers in woodlot blocks were from outside and the locals do not receive the lease of woodlot plots". He also complained that,

although government woodlot projects were to be carried out only on denuded, degraded and unencroached lands, often woodlot are implemented in lands where the locals have been cultivating crops over a long period of time. Local people are not consulted or notified before such implementation of government projects, which leads to economic and social dislocation (Interview: May 1994).

The reduction in available resources together with insecurity in land and forest tenure have contributed both to impoverishment of people and degradation of resources. Alim in his study observes, "the land tenure issue needs to be appropriately resolved within the context of community based participation for the success of social forestry program of the government" (Alim 1995:58).

Rural power structure, poverty and deforestation are critically interrelated problems, which are again accelerated by land scarcity, insecure land tenurial rights, natural disasters and inadequate remedial responses. Chun K.Lai observes, "only the rich in the rural areas have tended to benefit from government reforestation schemes. This indicates the failure of government programs to address the needs of the

poor under conditions of growing landlessness in the country. The government forest department officials at the local level in these areas are reported to often have links with local elites who have control over the land and resources in the area and dominance in the rural power structure. According to Lai, "in reality much of the land available for social forestry in Bangladesh is controlled by rich and powerful local elites and is difficult to obtain for social forestry programs involving the rural poor and the landless (Lai 1992:50). The problem of afforestation is deeply related to rural poverty and the rural power structure. The landless and small farmers have very limited access to and control over the means of production and also common property resources. Despite their common interests, the poor and marginalized often cannot align themselves with their fellow poor and have to ally themselves with influential rural elites for survival. Patron-client relationships often cannot be avoided because of extreme poverty and hardship. The local elites exploit this class disparity.

Evaluation of the "Thana Afforestation and Nursery Development Project" of the Government of Bangladesh also reveals that women's involvement in the program is minimal. The project is designed with hardly a mention of women and without any recognition of the differential impact project activities will have on them. Despite their substantial

knowledge base, women are usually excluded from decision making and assumptions about women's priorities are often made without speaking to women themselves. The valuable insights they may provide or the gender specific needs they may have are usually ignored and overlooked in such programs of the government. According to Saleha Banu, a local women in Kaliakoir upazila,

as the impact of forest depletion is felt particularly by rural women in Bangladesh, they are usually interested to participate in any discussion and decisions about what tree species will be planted and where. But forest officials and extension workers speak mainly to community leaders and village councils who are predominantly made up of men (Interview: May 1994).

Social forestry programs cannot realize their objectives if they continue to neglect the priorities, concerns and rights of women or gender differential impact of such programs. The disappointing results of the government social forestry to date point towards the necessity of a more flexible and participatory approach to social forestry, taking into consideration the class/gender differential impact with people's (both men and women) input into project design and species selection.

The root cause of the failure of government social forestry lies in their neglect of socio-economic and political factors. There is a lack of integration with overall development policy. Conservation programs are often drawn up in a vacuum disconnected and isolated from other interrelated

issues. The government project has remained sectoral in which interconnections of gender, class and the environment have been neglected. The inevitable result is that the development programs continue to generate and intensify environmental degradation and class/gender differential impact. There is a lack of integration of environmental programs with the rights, needs and priorities of local people. There is little genuine participation of local communities in the formulation of social forestry and other environmental projects. Nor do such projects draw upon local knowledge and experience. On the contrary, there prevails an antagonistic relationship between the locals (many of them tribal) in forest areas who allege that the government authorities are destroying forests for commercial plantation and the government authorities who accuse the locals of destroying and encroaching on the forest. This creates an obstacle for the success of the agroforestry and woodlot projects in Bangladesh (Gain 1991:16).

Analysis of the government afforestation project clearly demonstrates that there is hardly any scope for people's participation in forestry development practices. Forestry activities of the government tend to be dominated by commercial plantation and forest reserve management which fail to take into account the needs of the local population. Involvement of local communities is crucial to the success of plantations. If there is no benefit to them, plantations are

seen as a threat to be resisted. It may be argued that protection of forests is only really possible when those who live in and around the forests and who traditionally managed forest resources on their own, are made responsible for management of forest resources, rather than being treated as potential destroyers of forests. There is a need for a change of attitude on the part of the policy makers and a need for recognition that the local people have a certain wisdom and knowledge regarding environmental protection, which may contribute to policy making in forestry programs. The success of social forestry is critically dependent upon the ability of rural communities to strengthen their organizational and managerial capabilities.

c) SHRIMP CULTIVATION PROJECT

Supported by the World Bank and the UNDP, a project in shrimp cultivation has been in operation for some years in Bangladesh and has been engaged in the infra-structural development and organization of the shrimp farmers. The coastal shrimp farms are located mainly in Cox's Bazar district in the East and Shatkhira, Khulna and Bagerhat districts in the West of Bangladesh. Wealthy entrepreneurs who recognized the export potential in shrimp cultivation started buying up or leasing land usually on a long term basis from peasant farmers in the flood plains around the Bay of Bengal. Over the past years shrimp farms in the coastal areas have

contributed increasingly to the country's economy. Shrimp processing plants can get up to five years exemption from income tax, which illustrates the importance the government places on shrimp exports as a source of much needed foreign exchange. However, there is no government policy on shrimp cultivation. There are only some local rules (not statutory laws, only administrative orders) regarding shrimp culture (Kallol 1995:8). As noted earlier, although shrimp cultivation is not a government project, it is studied here because of its adverse environmental impact. In spite of such an impact, there is no government policy to restore uncontrolled shrimp cultivation, rather, government policy has been favorable towards such a project because of its potential as a source of foreign exchange earnings. This reflects the nature of state environmental policy and its indifference to widespread responses in civil society to the adverse effects of shrimp cultivation which has evolved in the form of the environmental movement discussed in the next chapter. Although the International Development Agency (IDA) financed shrimp culture project has huge potential for raising export earnings in foreign exchanges, it has a negative impact on a number of fronts.

Inadequate regulation of shrimp culture in the coastal belt has contributed to increased soil salinity and damage to sensitive ecosystems like mangrove forests. Coastal shrimp

lands are created by converting agricultural land and mangrove forest into saline ponds as shrimp cultivation requires holding of stagnant saline water for six to nine months every year. Large parts of polders in the South West of Bangladesh are inundated for months. A study by Babar Kabir found that,

the release of effluent and wastes from intensive prawn farms and hatcheries in the form of excess lime, organic wastes, pesticides, chemicals and disease micro organisms may directly or indirectly affect estuarine and marine organisms and produce resistant strains of pathogens. In addition to land depression the soil composition of both the shrimp farms and adjacent areas may change irreversibly" (B.Kabir 1993:14).

When the water from shrimp farms is flushed through nearby agricultural lands, the farmlands become infertile and infested with pathological organisms from the ponds. As a result, not only the shrimp farms are rendered useless, but even the surrounding lands are eventually destroyed. Small local farmers are adversely affected because they cannot grow salt sensitive crops like vegetables near their homestead and lose fruit trees because of soil salinity.

Excessive salinity has also led to a shrinkage of common grazing ground for the livestock and poultry. Livestock, especially cows and goats, are important private resources which play a significant role in overcoming the vulnerabilities of the marginal households. Women are affected adversely and their income earning potential has been reduced since they play a central role in the livestock economy in

rural Bangladesh. Shrimp culture has caused problems in raising these animals. According to A. Mistri of Madhukhali, Paikgacha,

raising livestock is indeed a great problem. There is no land left for grazing. The health of these animals are also deteriorating. Before the advent of shrimp culture I had eight cattle breeds but now I have only four such animals which are very weak and disease prone (Interview: May 1994).

There are also reports that common grazing land has been leased out to shrimp farmers with the introduction of shrimp culture (Atiur Rahman 1993:12). This has deprived the local people of the common property resources, which has led to scarcity of fodder and grasses for animals and the deterioration of health of the animals.

Shrimp farming leads to a change in land use pattern and thereby affects traditional agricultural activities. The shrimp ponds in the coastal plains are constructed on land which was formerly used for rice. Peasant farmers who have leased their land claim that the increase in salinity required for shrimp cultivation has reduced rice yields and has adverse implications for trees in the area. According to Rahmat Ali of Madhukhali in Paikgacha,

the yield of paddy has gone down since the shrimp culture has started. Before, we could subsist from whatever we produced in our farm. But now we need to buy almost everything from the market for our day to day living. Trees, have been the worst victim of intrusion of saline water. Fruit trees like coconut, nut, mango, jackfruit and lichi which were quite common in this area are now dying (Interview, May 1994).

There are reports of shrimp cultivators deliberately breaching sea/river dikes in order to inundate their shrimp farms with tidal inflows -- even though such an action has an adverse effect on the crop production of others in the adjacent fields because of the resultant salinity. This artificial flooding of arable land by rich and powerful people to increase their own profits at the expense of an entire community (destroying common resources) aggravates the already existing conflicts between ordinary poor peasants and rich businessmen. Shahed Hassan observes,

most of the ghers (enclosers) constructed for shrimp culture did not follow the standard design and the gher owners allowed further intrusion of saline water through intentionally damaging the enclosers so as to affect the surrounding croplands. As a consequence, productivity of land diminished and the small and marginal farmers were compelled to sell their land to the gher owners, who converted that land as another gher. This has affected the local social structure (Hassan 1993:4).

The socio-economic effects of shrimp culture on marginal farmers, landless groups, share croppers and farm workers are definitely adverse. Shapan Adnan observes, "shrimp cultivation provides a classic instance of public goods, in the form of embanked polders, being utilized for private profit making activities at the expense of potentially irreversible environmental damages affecting the poor majority" (Adnan 1993:197). Shrimp cultivation has unleashed contradictions that are beyond the control of the local people. Their

traditional command over the principal private resource (for example, land) has been seriously threatened. A kind of "enclave economy" has developed in the coastal belt marginalizing poorer land holders in the process (A.Rahman 1993:11). Shrimp farming has been concentrated in the hands of the larger landowners. The poor cannot put all their land in shrimp culture due to lack of capital and are forced to rent out their pieces of land to large farmers.

Since the introduction of shrimp farming a new lease system has developed. A substantial number of lease holders are from outside and often are indifferent to the interests of local paddy farms which gives rise to a high incidence of land disputes and social tensions. A large number of peasants have been forced out of their traditional sources of income. The wealthy shrimp cultivators are making many people landless by purchasing or leasing land on a long term basis from peasant cultivation. The small farmers in areas suitable for shrimp cultivation are often forced or threatened by shrimp entrepreneurs to lease land. The local people or farmers are usually not employed by the shrimp entrepreneurs, who prefer giving employment to their own people from outside the local community. Many landless laborers and their families, subsistence fisherfolks and agricultural workers have been forced to leave the area. The economic hardships of the local labouring class have thus become intensified (Rahman 1993:6).

Shrimp used to form a useful supplement to the diet of poor people in coastal areas, but they are now becoming very scarce because of the fry being collected to stock the shrimp ponds (Monan 1989:89). As shrimp is grown for export market, it does not replace the lost production of local fish and livestock, leading to a severe decline in protein, fat and vitamin intake, resulting in growth stunting, night blindness and acute malnutrition in children and adults.

Shrimp cultivation also has a gender differential impact. A significant number of women in coastal areas work as fry/shrimp catchers and processors. The majority of local men who were traditionally peasants, paddy farmers and fisherfolks in this region were forced to leave the area due to unemployment, encroachment of their lands and increasing salinity in the area. Many of them left for the cities to seek employment. This migration left many women in the area to fend for themselves and their children. They are often left with no option but to work for shrimp farmers who exploit them in a number of ways. Not only are they given very low wages for their labor, but the personal security of these women is under great threat. There are reports of incidents in which their honor and self-respect were dashed to the ground by the muscle men of the power elites (Rahman 1993:14). They are hired for their cheap labor. For shrimp catching and processing they have to stay in salty water with a lime component for eight

to ten hours each day which is known to cause physical damage, heart attacks, diseases and nail decay (N.Ahmed 1993:14). Clearly, shrimp cultivation is adversely affecting the livelihood -- the economic, physical and social well-being -- of the population in the coastal areas of Bangladesh. More specifically, it is having a class/gender differential impact. Not only is it increasing the impoverishment of the local poor at the expense of local influential people and outside leaseholders, it is also having a differential impact on women. Women in the area are marginalized both in class terms as well as in gender terms.

Thus it may be concluded that the primary beneficiaries of shrimp culture in the coastal belt of Bangladesh have been the outsider leaseholders and a few of the local influential people. Their lack of respect for the traditional ecological balance has not only created serious repercussions in the economic well-being of the poor in the locality, but a host of social contradictions have also been sharpened. There were violent conflicts between landless groups (notably women) and shrimp landlords in November 1990, January 1991 and September 1995. These incidents of violent social conflicts as a response to environmental degradation due to shrimp cultivation are discussed in Chapter Five. Profits and foreign exchange from shrimp farming are earned at the expense of broader social interest, which include the interest of

marginal farmers, landless groups, women, share croppers and fisherfolks who lost their livelihood and homestead.

d) WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT

As much of Bangladesh is deltaic in nature, the management of water resources dominates environmental and developmental planning in many sectors of the government. To date, the Government of Bangladesh as well as a number of foreign agencies have supported a predominantly structural approach to dealing with water resource management. Structures are often designed to control water flow in such a way that flooding is entirely eliminated from an area of land. The elimination of flooding is often known to impinge negatively on soil fertility, fishery productivity and ground water recharge, and has an obvious negative socio-economic impact. Environmental degradation in some areas due to drainage of wetland, flooding, waterlogging, siltation and salinization is often the result of inadequate planning of Flood Control Drainage and Irrigation (FCDI) projects and a failure to consider their wider impact. Despite these findings and growing grassroots pressure for alternative approaches, the government continues to stress large-scale damming and embanking of the network of alluvial channels migrating through the country. This section will review the impact of some of the past development projects in the country and analyze the present policy of the government which continues

to stress a structural approach to water resource management as may be noted in the recent Flood Action Plan (FAP) of the Government of Bangladesh which was supported by multinational donors.

Some of the flood control and irrigation projects which have taken place in the past twenty years have not only had an ecologically negative impact, but they have led to an increase in poverty, increased inequality and the marginalization of small farmers, fishers, landless people and women. The argument usually put forward to justify the embankments are that a less risky situation will allow wider diffusion of the use of modern inputs like High Yield Variety (HYV) seeds, fertilizers, irrigation and pesticides so that production and income will rise (Asaduzzaman 1994:14). Overall, the projects have strengthened the dominance of paddy in cropping patterns. Against such positive changes one must weigh the losses in other crops. Not only were traditional rice varieties discontinued, non-paddy crops were also lost. These included jute, sugar cane, wheat, potato and a few of the rabi crops, such as pulses and spices. These probably had an adverse impact on nutrition, because of the discontinuation of crops like pulses which are rich in protein. Although in some of the projects, agricultural benefits have been substantial, the income distribution among the farmers has become more inequitable.

In some of the areas, irrigation through the major flood control and drainage structures has led to drainage congestion, waterlogging and other negative socio-economic consequences. The example of Beel Dakatia in Khulna is well known, where for the past ten to twelve years there has been total inundation, because the project was badly designed. In their attempts to keep specific areas flood-free, such projects have been responsible for severe water-logging in surrounding areas. There is evidence that local people reacted to such disasters by breaching the embankments. In 1990, the affected people, thousands of men and women, resorted to a massive public mobilization, popularly known as Beel Dakatia Mahasamabesh (gathering) and violated the government imposed ban in order to breach the mud walls of the polder as an acceptable solution to get rid of the misery of year-round water congestion problem (Mandal 1994:64). Adnan observes,

the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) and the local administration failed to either solve these problems or provide adequate compensatory measures to relieve the hardships of the people. It was in this backdrop that the inhabitants of Beel Dakatia were eventually compelled to protest against administrative inaction and indifference (Adnan et al. 1992:51).

This incidence illustrates very sharply how the actions or inactions of the water resource project authority turn out to be an endemic source of social conflicts and public anger. It also illustrates how forces in civil society respond to failure of government policies.

A study by M. Asaduzzaman found that breaches in the embankments are common and so are public cuts to relieve drainage congestion. Agricultural farmers also sometimes cut the embankments during the dry period to facilitate surface water irrigation and close the openings before the monsoons (Asaduzzaman 1994:15). The study also found that due to flood control measures not only the depth of normal flooding outside the project area has increased, but the back flow often causes floods of longer duration (ibid:15). As a result, river erosion and drainage also poses severe problems. All these have adverse effects on the local poor people.

Other examples are the Meghna Dhonagoda project and the Chalan Beel project in Rajshahi, the Sukunia Beel project in Faridpur and the Zilkar Haor project in Sylhet (Mandal 1994:64). Mandal in his study found that in the Chalan Beel project, the Sukunia Beel project and the Zilkar Haor project, heavy drainage congestion take place as the embankments obstruct normal run off inside the project. Independent studies carried out to investigate the effects of the Meghna Dhonagoda Irrigation scheme have brought out many negative aspects of this government project. The enormous increase in the number of insects, the depletion of the soil, the problems created for women in terms of health and the pollution of the water are some of the consequences (Adnan 1989:17). These projects have led to people having to leave their homes and

migrate. They have even led to a worsening of the nutritional level of the people. Although there has been an influx of rice crops, traditional agricultural practice has been thwarted and the biodiversity of agriculture transformed into organized farming. In other words, it has led to a worsening of poverty and to degradation of the environment and the nutritional level of the people, because people are going for more rice as against pulses, fish and other vegetable products (Kabir 1993:54).

Due to the building of embankments, there has been a substantial loss in open water fisheries output in several parts of Bangladesh (Ali and Waliuzzaman 1991:105). Embankment projects cause a lowering of water levels, so that fish cannot migrate and the water pollutes and stagnates. This had obvious social ramifications. One of the major sources of discontent among the fishermen in the country has been the fall in income from their traditional activities of open water fishery. Tracts of water are sometimes leased by influential landowners to cultivate fish culture. The growth of culture fisheries in place of open water fisheries has had a redistributational effect in favour of farmers and the landowners and away from the poor and the landless fishermen. The poor have lost in terms of nutrition as the flood plain fishery was a common resource, easily accessible and formed a part of the diet of the poor people. These frequently lead to social conflicts in

the project area.

There are also gender-related impact due to flood control measures. The increased food output as a result of an influx of rice crops may have increased the work load of women, but did not necessarily improve their nutritional situation. Starvation is still experienced by households at least seasonally. When this occurs, it is the women who bear an unequal burden compared to men (Asaduzzaman 1994:22). All of these obviously have given rise to resentment, and sometimes even violent conflicts, in civil society in Bangladesh. These adverse impact indicate a planning and design failure on the part of the BWDB of the government to take into account the differential needs of the local people, gender and class in environmental planning. As M.A.S. Mandal observes,

the expected beneficiaries of the flood control, drainage and irrigation projects are generally landowners, farmers and wage laborers but project impact on other professions such as capture fishermen, boatmen, businessmen and those dispossessed of their lands or those left outside the project are totally overlooked or inadequately taken care of (Mandal:1994:63).

There was obviously no discussion with the intended beneficiaries at the planning or implementation stage of the project. Thus the necessity of the projects and the way people felt about their needs were not assessed. Instead, there was a failure to incorporate local valuable knowledge and experience on hydrology, which could have supplemented hydrological information available with the BWDB. Because of

insufficient consultation with local groups and project affected persons, little incentive exists for community cooperation or people's participation, which is necessary for the long term viability of projects.

Also, there has been a tendency for government planning to be sectoral in nature with a limited awareness of the impact that Flood Control, Drainage and Irrigation (FCDI) and other infrastructure projects have on other sectors. As a result, environmental impact have arisen in several sectors or issue areas. They include impact on fisheries, mangroves, wetland, agricultural land, settlements, water transport and the quantity and quality of water supplies. Project feasibility studies have often failed to consider socio-economic costs and benefits and the wider impact on different interest groups in societies.

Although a large body of evidence exists which makes clear that the FCDI devices built in the past have often been dismal environmental, social and economic failures, government policies have continued to emphasize building embankments. The policies proposed in the Flood Action Plan (FAP) represent an attempt to control the entire watershed of Bangladesh through the construction of embankments and polders along the major rivers of the country. The first phase (1990-1995) consisted mainly of studies on the basis of which construction is to begin after 1995 (DGIS 1993:37). FAP started with 11 main

components and 15 supporting studies and pilot projects. The main components were made up of several regional and urban planning studies, feasibility studies for projects and special programs on flood forecasting, early warning and flood preparedness. These studies were to indicate the structural and non-structural measures needed to minimize the impact of flood damage (FPCO 1995:2). However, certain FAP components moved into minor experimental construction of embankments and compartments during this study period. As the coordinator of the project, the World Bank is attempting to combine four different proposals, several ongoing projects and donor assistance from 14 international funders in one of the largest "development" projects in the country's history. The FAP is funded by four multilateral donors, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the European Economic Community (EEC) and by 11 bilateral donors: Japan, Canada, US, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK. The FAP is managed by a special unit within the Ministry of Irrigation, Water Development and Flood Control, called the Flood Plan Coordination Organization (FPCO) in close consultation with the BWDB and other agencies. The Government of Bangladesh set up FPCO in 1990 to supervise, coordinate and monitor FAP activities aided by a Panel of Experts (POE) and specialists. Afazuddin Ahmed, Additional Secretary of the

Ministry of Irrigation and Flood Control observed,

three international review conferences were held in Dhaka in 1990, 1992 and 1993 and a draft final report on the first five year phase of FAP activities was presented and extensively reviewed nationally and internationally in 1994. Flood Control was the dominating theme in its 11 guiding principles. This changed over the years as awareness about environmental issues became more pronounced through studies under FAP and NEMAP (Interview: May 1994).

Although claims are made that attention to the environment, fisheries and other social aspects have been added to the original Flood Action Plan, the plan continues to be dominated significantly by technical ways of thinking. The institutional framework of the FAP continues to render it difficult to accommodate influences from beyond the world of civil engineering. The construction of large scale civil engineering works implies drastic and irreversible change in the conditions of the natural environment and living condition for millions in Bangladesh. Such interventions are likely to have lasting consequences which cannot be mitigated by compensating measures. In the approach of the proponents of FAP, flood control continues to remain the central point, while environment, fisheries and social factors are additional issues to be taken into account or added on. Also the FAP is gender blind and does not address the differential impact and needs of different classes in society. It does not take into account that different groups may have different interests or needs, nor the fact that people and the environment are the

major focus of any development project.

Rosalind Shaw in her study on floods and gender in Bangladesh observes that solutions generated popularly by national government and international aid organizations of the construction of large scale embankments in Bangladesh rely upon one-dimensional conceptions of the interaction between people and the environment. In this conception, the social and cultural nature (and consequently the heterogeneous, differentiated nature) of natural hazards is disregarded. According to her,

Floods not only have varying consequences for rich and poor, men and women and rural and urban dwellers, but their very nature as hazards is constituted by these and other forms of human social difference (Shaw 1995:214).

Shaw argues that by overlooking this heterogeneity, high tech embankment projects fail to take account of their own differential consequences, in which they may themselves present hazards for the most vulnerable people. She further observes,

the construction of embankments can reduce the soil moisture and fertility, leading to deteriorating rice harvests for those farmers who cannot afford irrigation. Embankments can also reduce surface water and the latter's resources upon which the poor particularly rely. Also, because husbands desert their wives and children during extreme hardship, any further impoverishment generated by such projects has more serious consequences for women and children than for men (Shaw 1995:214).

Thus, it may be concluded that in the FAP, little attention is given to the position of landless people and

women. The women, who constitute a large portion of the landless, will be most vulnerable because displacement will throw them into uncertainty. Massive displacement of millions of people may also have serious impact on the family structure. Shapan Adnan provides an empirical critique of the FAP and notes that among those affected by floods and related problem, "women and children are usually the most helpless and disadvantaged" (Adnan 1991:70). Similarly, Bruce Curry and Rezaul Karim argue that gender differentiation splits the entire FAP and gender issues necessitate a major revision of the entire FAP process. Seeking to explore the contradictions inherent in FAP and advance an alternative approach, they use a gender differentiated paradigm in their study to seek the views of those who were affected by the 1988 flood. Their findings reveal that the population, both male and female, affected by the 1988 flood, clearly wish to participate in planning the future of their families. Curry and Karim conclude that,

spontaneous people's participation in Bangladesh, must be allowed not orchestrated.... The institutions required to implement an alternative approach to flood mitigation would be institutions representing the interests, aspirations and option values of the women and men of Bangladesh who were affected by 1988 flooding (Curry and Karim 1993:41).

Some development NGOs have also been critical of FAP, stressing NGO responsibility as grassroots level organizations. Qazi Faruque Ahmed, the chairperson of the

Coalition of Environmental NGOs and Executive Director of Proshika, was critical of government's failure to involve NGOs in such a huge national plan. He expressed his disapproval of the FAP study mechanism at a FAP discussion meeting on May 15, 1993 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. His primary concern was that people, for whose benefit the Plan was made were kept in the dark. Ahmed observes,

we have seen that the construction of embankments has benefitted some at the expense of many and at the expense of the environment. Information about FAP is not transmitted to the concerned people to elicit their opinion (quoted in Grassroots Supplement:July/Sept 1993:2).

Khushi Kabir, Chairperson of the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB) and Project Coordinator of Nijera Kori also expressed her disapproval of the FAP study mechanism in the same meeting. Both explained NGO responsibility as grassroot level agencies towards FAP and the Government's negligence in involving the NGOs in such a huge national initiative (Dhaka Courier, June 1993:15). There were also repeated demonstrations and protest actions by local people in FAP study areas, which are discussed in Chapter Five. These responses in civil society clearly manifest people's opposition to the unsustainable development programs of the government.

The FAP has been controversial in Bangladesh from its inception in 1989, with critics questioning the social,

environmental and economic implications of building embankments and polders on a large scale. The FAP faces broad resistance from academics, non-governmental organizations, grassroots organizations, women's organizations and from the masses in rural areas. A number of critics questioned the legitimacy of the decision making process of the FAP, they pointed out that the general masses for whom the FAP has far reaching consequences have hardly any participation in the process nor are they properly informed (Saleemul Huq 1993, Adnan 1991, Curry and Karim 1993). The critics argue that the FAP is likely to induce increasing inequality among the population and will marginalize small farmers, fishermen and landless people. Although the project is going to involve resettlement of a large number of people, the local people have not been consulted and involved in planning and design. The costs, in terms of human misery, of being evicted from one's ancestral home, is overlooked or underestimated in the FAP. The critics argue that many projects such as those proposed in the FAP already exist in the country. The few that have been studied and analyzed have proven to be dismal failures which created environmental disaster areas (Chalan Beel, Beel Dakatia). In view of past experience, the implementation of the FAP is likely to have an enormous impact on the lives of millions of people in Bangladesh as well as the natural environment.

The state interventions on gender and environment both in policy and in practice have superficially integrated gender and environmental concerns to existing policies. There has been no serious attempt to transform or restructure the existing development framework or to interlink issues of gender, class and environment. The state has relied basically on reform of existing policies with minor changes here and there. It may be argued that the state in Bangladesh has adopted an approach similar to "women and environment" approach discussed in Chapter three in linking gender, class and environmental concerns. Such an approach is influenced by WID policies and does not concern itself with restructuring the prevailing power structure in society.

The Women's Vocational Training for Population Activities Project (WVTPA) studied here clearly illustrates a target driven nature which does not consider people's choices or needs, but treats women's development as secondary to population goals. Such population control projects of the government also rely on the thesis that overpopulation in Bangladesh is the main cause of poverty and environmental degradation, diverting attention from more crucial factors such as unequal distribution of resources, environmental degradation, and gender/class differentiation. The social forestry program of the government studied here, Thana Afforestation and Nursery Development Project, the IDA

financed shrimp cultivation projects and the Flood Action Plan (FAP) also substantiate the argument that inadequate consideration is given to the adverse effects of environmental degradation and the interconnections of gender and class in such environmental concerns. Such projects have contributed to the destruction of common property resources which are of particular importance to the poor majority in Bangladesh. Despite the protests made by the people, regarding the ill effects of unsustainable development projects, there appears to be a lack of serious response on the part of the state to the demands of civil society.

In the government's approach, meeting the project goal is given greater emphasis than the more sensitive and important issues of environmental degradation, people's participation, the gender and class-differential impact and the interrelations among them. State intervention does not correspond to the actual need, national capability and aspirations of the people. Official actions tend to be guided by political exigencies and the desire to obtain more foreign assistance without keeping in mind the proper perspective of developmental priorities. After all these years of state directed development, Bangladesh continues to be characterized by high levels of poverty and economic inequality, gender disparity, class conflicts and environmental degradation. The pursuit of primarily growth-oriented policies without due

consideration to distributional aspects and structural reform has resulted in contradictions and conflicts in society. On the positive side, however, as opposed to the weight of state machinery, there has been an emergence of grassroots resistance which, while stemming from a range of ideological and political positions and focusing on differing issues, together embodies a strong critique of and protest against ongoing development programs and underlines the need for an alternative, more holistic and egalitarian approach to social and economic change. The next chapter examines the proliferation of such resistance in the form of people's movement, women's movement and micro-level development experiments in civil society in Bangladesh which are carving out a space for an alternative development paradigm.

NOTES

1 The GAD (Gender and Development) perspective focuses on gender rather than women, particularly the social construction of gender roles and gender relations. Although some government development agencies and some NGOs have adopted a more gender-oriented approach to women's development, adding gender analysis training to established WID training programs, this approach has only rarely been integrated into development planning. The GAD approach sees women as agents of change rather than as passive recipients of development assistance and stresses the need for women to organize themselves for a more effective political voice.

2 Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) withdrew from the World Bank Consortium, because they insisted that incentives and disincentives be removed as they were too coercive.

3 The Task Force Report on Participatory Forestry in Bangladesh (GOB 1987) estimated that nearly 1.5 million hectares of land are potentially available for social forestry. Of this, a total area of over 1 million hectares is theoretically controlled by government agencies, principally the Forest Department (which administers forest lands) and the Ministry of Land and Distribution Administrations (Khas land and unclassified State Forests).

CHAPTER FIVE

RESPONSES IN CIVIL SOCIETY TO DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS OF THE STATE

Civil society in Bangladesh in the first two decades of independence consisted mainly of elite groups which collaborated with the bureaucracy, the military and political leadership to maintain dominance at the state level. Women's groups, peasants, sharecroppers, landless laborers, labor unions, professional associations, students, human rights groups and the marginalized sections of the rural and the urban poor had almost no representation at the decision making level, resulting in statist, repressive, gender and class blind policies which subordinated civil society actors. Environmental impact of the destruction of common property resources were also not given any consideration in such policies. The rural sector in the country constituted predominantly of patron-client linkages which only increased differentiation and polarization in rural society. Such a situation of extreme state neglect of societal concerns were due in part to the political and organizational weakness of civil society. Since the mid-eighties, however, a trend toward the expansion of civil society became visible when new civil society actors began to protest against repressive state policies and made their voices heard. Donor pressure to incorporate gender and environmental concerns in development

and the involvement of some development NGOs in conscientizing and mobilizing the grassroots also had a positive impact in changing state/society relations in Bangladesh. With democratization in 1990, further changes have occurred in civil society in Bangladesh.

This chapter examines and analyses the wide variety of responses in civil society to state interventions in development and the collective effort to bring about social change in Bangladesh. It focuses on the women's movement and the environmental movement as grassroots responses in civil society to the inadequacies of state policies and strategies.¹ Also, there appears to be a convergence of interest between these grassroots movements and the objectives of some local non-governmental development organizations (NGDOs) in the country which are playing the role of animators in conscientizing the people and mobilizing them to assert their right to participate in development as subjects. Those NGOs that work as grassroots support organizations are regarded here as important forces for the consolidation of civil society. It is argued that grassroots organizations help build up the capacity of the people themselves to become actors in determining their own agendas.

Although NGOs often have dependency relationships with donors and many of them are confined to service delivery roles, some of the development NGOs are playing a catalytic

role in ensuring the involvement of the masses by supporting grassroots organizations in the process of economic and social development. This dissertation recognizes the importance of such NGOs because of their links to the growth of social movements. The chapter focuses on three local development NGOs in Bangladesh, Nijera Kori, UBINIG and Proshika, which work as grassroots support organizations and which have consciously made an effort to link gender, class and environmental concerns in some of their projects and programs. It needs to be noted that the activities of these three NGOs are in no way representative of all NGOs in Bangladesh, because development NGOs are heterogenous and have different orientations and focuses. Also, some other NGOs too have programs which are environmentally sustainable and link gender and environmental concerns which are not included in the scope of my study. These NGOs were chosen for case study because their approach to development issues contrasts with the approach of the government discussed in Chapter Four. I have focused on Nijera Kori's "conscientization" program against the harmful effects of shrimp cultivation in Southern parts of Bangladesh, UBINIG's ecological agricultural program in Tangail which may be seen as an innovative response to environmental consequences of the 1988 flooding, and Proshika's social forestry scheme of protecting degraded sal forests in Kaliakoir upazila in Gazipur district. On the basis of these

case studies, I argue that the approaches taken by these NGOs are holistic and link gender, class and environmental concerns. Their approach provides important input in breaking down oppressive structures in society and reconceptualizing the premises on which the dominant model of development is based. On the basis of these examinations, the chapter argues that though still in its embryonic state, these responses in civil society have the potential to challenge the diverse forms of power and domination which permeate society and are carving out a space for an alternative.

a) WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

The women's movement prior to the liberation war in 1971 was primarily urban-based and composed mostly of elite women. In the early 1970s, there were approximately a dozen women's organizations in the country, which were involved in welfare-oriented work. The political parties and their mass fronts, such as students and trade unions, had separate women's wings, but they, too, were mostly active in urban areas. Women's issues were not raised and the social and legal status of women remained unchanged (Khan 1988:107).

However, women's participation was most extensive in the liberation movement of 1971 in which women from all walks of life rendered support to the freedom fighters. The independence of the country in 1971 created a growing

awareness among women about their rights and responsibilities in the new state. There was a widespread growth of consciousness across Bangladesh regarding women's oppression and the need to fight it. A number of women's organizations were created in urban and rural areas concentrating on welfare activities among destitute women and children. A few women's organizations at the national level were also established under the direct patronage of the government to mobilize women for participation in development activities. Bangladesh Jatiyo Mahila Shangstha (BJMS) was created as an apex national women's organization in 1976 under a resolution of the government to promote the social, economic, education and cultural upliftment of women. However, BJMS was a state dominated organization which remained subservient to the government and adopted agendas which did not call for restructuring the prevailing order. As Salma Khan observes,

BJMS failed in attaining its objective, because it never achieved its independent character and was subsequently transformed into a subservient agency of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and is currently functioning like a government sponsored NGO receiving funds from the revenue budget of the government for its operation (Khan 1988:90).

However, several grassroots women's movements have also been forged over the years, which play a significant role in transforming the subordination of women and in the process breaking down oppressive structures in society. Women's voice has certainly grown in strength, due largely to the increasing

power of the women's movement in the last two decades.

Rahnuma Ahmed in her study on the women's movement in Bangladesh discerns two trends in the movement --1) a liberal reforming trend, mainly urban-based and 2) a trend to mobilize women in the rural sector. The liberal reformist trend addresses itself to the government and seeks increased privileges. It is dominated by urban-educated middle class women, and their primary thrust is the urban sector and the benefits and advantages linked to the urban sector. They are interested in extending and improving these urban facilities, thus their demands are for increased educational facilities, more employment for women, an increased quota in public sector jobs, housing and transport facilities, provision of day-care centers and reduced commodity prices. Rahnuma Ahmed observes,

A reading of history reveals uneven developments -- a few outstanding, respectable women personalities, fewer rebels, creation of institutions and reformist groups -- both progressive and backward looking, whose activities ranged from dabbling in charity work to fighting for greater equality with men, primarily in educational and legal spheres and large scale participation of women in nationalist struggles. The picture that emerges is of a fragmented, issue based, primarily conciliatory 'movement'. All women have not been active all the time, rather a few women have been involved part of the time (Ahmed 1985:20).

The other trend, according to Ahmed, is the mobilization/ conscientization of women in rural areas through government and NGO activities. The government organizes women through cooperatives and Food for Work (FFW) programs while NGOs work

ranges from income-generating activities to conscientization/mobilization. According to her, the net result of these activities on rural women has been a definite increase in the number of wage-earning women and some groups have acquired the capability to fight and struggle for realizing immediate demands (Ahmed 1985:18). Ahmed's analysis is based on the nature of the movement in the 1970s and early 1980s. By 1990, however, there were several important changes in the scenario.

First, the number of women's organizations has multiplied. According to one estimate, there were more than six hundred women's organizations registered with the Ministry of Social Welfare in 1985 (Roushan Jahan 1991:231). However, there was a great variation in size and resources available to such organizations. Second, many of the women's organizations shifted their orientation from welfare to development, enabling poor women to obtain access to credit, employment, income, literacy, health and family planning. Third, many of the NGOs and women's organizations became active in rural areas, mobilizing rural women on a regular basis. While women field workers and rural women's group meetings were oddities in the early 1970s, by 1990, according to one estimate, more than a million poor women were engaged in regular group meetings and activities and over one hundred thousand women field workers were involved in projects to link poor women

with development resources and services (Janice Jiggins 1987). Finally, many of the women's organizations started establishing linkages with other organizations, especially NGOs, which focused on consciousness raising and group organization and were active at the grassroots level. Through alliance building, women's groups were able to raise gender issues in different forums. Women's groups and organizations also started using alternative media and forms of communication such as street theater, role play, posters and videos, to raise mass awareness about gender issues (Jahan 1995:103). This change may be attributed to the changing nature of civil society in Bangladesh, where the issues concerning women have become more politicized, and also to the transition to democracy in the 1990s, which brought about more freedom and more opportunity for women to respond to oppressive structures in society in contrast to the years of authoritarian rule when gender concerns were neglected and ignored.

Prominent women's groups and organizations -- Mahila Parishad, Women for Women, Nari Pokkho and Mahila Samity, and some development NGOs, UBINIG, Nijera Kori and Saptagram Nari Swanirvhar Parishad (SNSP) among others -- started slowly to develop a women's agenda. With increasing frequency they began not only mobilizing women around issues which were traditionally regarded as women's issues, such as rape, dowry,

violence, wife abuse and trafficking in women, but also broadened the scope of the women's agenda to include many other developmental issues such as the debt crisis, environmental concerns (i.e., dumping of toxic waste, salination, waterlogging and deforestation), population control policies and programs, women's health issues and legal reforms.

Non-governmental organizations played an important catalytic role in involving grassroots women in public action. Women started taking part on their own as a group in public action. There has been a growth of advocacy NGOs concentrating on particular issues where they think an alternative voice needs to be heard, for example, some advocating alternatives to the Flood Action Plan (FAP), some advocating for better drug policy, and some advocating for the position of women to be considered by policy makers. Research on women's roles and position in society is undertaken extensively and is being recognized as an instrument for social change. Roushan Jahan observes that "the close links forged between women researchers and activists facilitated the development of women's voice and agenda" (Roushan Jahan 1991:242). Nari Pokkho and Women for Women, two feminist research and advocacy organizations, by organizing workshops, group discussions and seminars, have been instrumental in creating awareness among the people and policy planners about environmental issues and

their interconnections with gender and class issues.

Women's organizations became active in humanitarian and environmental crises like the flood of 1988, in social movements such as the opposition to fundamentalism and in political struggles like the pro-democracy movement of 1990. They were also active in peasant movements for land rights in different areas. Women took a leading role in organizing protests against environmental degradation in a number of regions in the country. Women's protest movements against shrimp cultivation, the Flood Action Plan and government social forestry projects (as discussed earlier in Chapter Four) are illustrative of such a role. A few NGOs have been active in mobilizing awareness among women's organizations about group rights. Banchte Shekha and Saptagram are the two women's organizations which have successfully supported the struggle for economic and legal rights. Nijera Kori has taken up issues of land encroachment in remote rural areas. In 1990, they worked with local groups in Paikghacha which were struggling against the armed onslaught of a powerful landlord to take over their land for shrimp cultivation -- which was endangering their environment. In Noakhali, they have tried to protect the landless working on khas land from the harassment of the landlords (Joushan Ara Rahman 1992:215).

In the past decade, violence against women has become a highly visible social issue in Bangladesh. Women's

organizations have played an important role in breaking down the oppressive structures in society. Women's groups have been pressing, among other things, for legislation and other measures to curb dowry, violence against women and female infanticide (Roushan Jahan 1988:219). Intense and broad based campaigns for removing gender discrimination and gender violence through legal redress have been undertaken by women's organizations both at the national and local levels. The main strategies employed by women's organizations in Bangladesh to combat violence against women have been publicizing and organizing around individual cases, legal awareness work and conscientization of both women and men on issues of gender violence. Women's organizations have launched major campaigns for the enactment of new and stringent laws providing deterrent punishment for violence against women.

The Mahila Parishad, a women's organization which has always been vocal about relevant political and women's issues, organized a campaign to pressure the government to pass anti-dowry legislation as early as 1980. Seventeen thousand women signed up for the campaign which led to the Prohibition of Dowry Act, 1980 (UNDP 1994:25). In 1982, a national seminar on the prevention of oppression against women was jointly organized by eighteen major women's groups in the country. In 1983, Mahila Parishad organized rallies and demonstrations which were attended by hundreds of women. Conscientizing and

mobilizing women for preventive action has also been undertaken by several groups at the field level. Mahila Parishad's mobilization for legal reforms, supported by others, has focused on the enactment of new and stringent laws providing deterrent punishment for gender violence both at home and outside. They have also enacted an uniform family code to supplant the various personal laws perpetuating gender inequality within the family in the various religious communities. Full ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (UNCEDAW) and implementation of the labor laws including the ILO convention which could ensure women's rights in society and the work place also formed a part of their agenda (UNDP 1994:25). Grassroots NGOs such as Nijera Kori, Saptagram, UBINIG and Proshika are also active in conscientizing women and men on issues of violence (Kabeer 1991). According to Rounaq Jahan,

the rising pressure from women's organizations for exemplary punishment expressed through organized protests has resulted in a recognition of the need for action both by the government and the public, but policy formulation and programs intended to reduce violence remain ineffective due to an imperfect understanding of the problems and the factors contributing to it (Rounaq Jahan 1995:103).

Women's organizations have made efforts to forge both horizontal and vertical linkages with other organizations, including government and non-government agencies, both at

local and national levels. At the national level, efforts were made to sensitize policy planners through continued advocacy and sustained dialogue by the women's organizations and the NGOs with the Planning Commission in the late eighties. As discussed above, this process led to the preparation of a position paper on "Mainstreaming Women in National Development" in 1989. It eventually brought about a major change in the Fourth Five Year Plan document. Mainstreaming women in development was accepted in principle by the Government of Bangladesh and various sectoral strategies were spelt out in the plan document for the first time. However, as we have seen, to what extent the plan was implemented in practice is a different issue.

At the local level, successful interventions have been made by Mahila Parishad and other organizations in disputes arising out of family and other community matters. Prompt protest and local action by Mahila Parishad and other organizations have activated some local administrations to take necessary legal actions against such glaring violation of the laws of the land and basic human rights. The vigorous programs of conscientization, group organization and other development related activities undertaken by NGOs such as Grameen Bank, BRAC, and Proshika have generated some noticeable changes in women's self-perception and participation in the socio-economic arena in rural life.

According to the UNDP report 1994,

given the aversion of many women's organizations to partisan political affiliation and also the general lack of priority given by political parties to women's issues, linkage with NGOs offers the most convenient and promising means of interacting with rural women and men on development issues and social transformation (UNDP 1994:27).

An example of organizing women to become active in social reorganization by the NGO, UBINIG may be cited here. After the floods of 1988, a tubewell installation program was taken by UBINIG in Tangail. Meetings were held with women and they were formed into groups called "tubewell groups" consisting of fifteen families on average, with ownership and leadership both given to women. Although protests were made by men, arguing that tubewell was an important family requirement and cannot legally be owned only by women, the women of Tangail did not give up their ownership. They strengthened their position by holding regular group meetings, responding to social issues and taking leadership in solving problems (Farida Akhter 1994:15).

Thus it may be concluded that the Bangladesh women's movement has contributed in a number of ways in changing society's attitude towards women and the policies of the government. It has made great efforts to erode the gender bias which characterizes orthodox development strategies. Feminist groups within the women's movements and some advocacy NGOs have been constantly voicing their opinion that gender

exploitation in society has to be understood within the context of a patriarchal order, and fundamental questions have to be posed about the legal rights of women, their economic exploitation and oppressive notions of sexuality upheld by socio-cultural and religious norms. According to this view, problems of gender discrimination and exploitation cannot be understood or resolved in a piecemeal manner, through the initiation of isolated projects and programs (Akhter 1992, Ahmad 1992). They have underscored the need to change the existing development models and practices which perpetuate different forms of inequality and exploitation. They put forward a vision not simply of women's development but of an alternative model of development where gender equality goes hand in hand with equality between classes. The insistence on a participatory process of development (planning, decision-making, implementation, monitoring, evaluation) adopted by most of the women's organizations and NGOs empower women by highlighting their inclusion in all phases of a project. This build their capacity and skill in public participation and management. By coming together in organizations, networks and movements, women in Bangladesh have struggled to bring the issues of basic human survival and the right to live in dignity to the forefront of public consciousness, to organize against repression and violence, and to mobilize their energies in a host of other ways. They have altered the ways

in which society, government, international institutions, men and they themselves evaluate their own work.

Mobilizing and struggling for specific demands gives people self confidence and experience. Thus, in organizing, they learn to shed their fears and speak up. They feel the strength of unity. Each such action makes them stronger, whatever the outcome may be. When they reach a level of consciousness about their rights and benefits, they acquire the capacity to organize movements against oppression and injustice. An approach based on empowerment of women can be discerned in the concerted efforts of both women's organizations and NGOs, which originates from years of mobilizing women at the grassroots level and which derives its strength from the many protest movements in which women have participated. This process of empowerment through group solidarity has the potential to be instrumental in changing gender relations.

Though still fragmented and issue-based, women's groups have, through a variety of strategies, including lobbying, advocacy, agitation and media publicity, have begun to influence public opinion and public policy discourses and have started taking some tentative steps towards defining their own agendas. Although there is no necessary agreement or convergence of understanding among women's groups, there is an increasing realization of the need for united agitation, at

least on specific issues. They are beginning to take an autonomous stand on a wide variety of national issues. All these represent small steps in what is clearly an extended struggle against patriarchy and gender biases in state policies and gender-differential impact of government programs. What they need to do now is to forge alliances with a wider network of people's groups in civil society to mobilize large scale popular support behind their vision of alternative development.

b) ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

As we have seen, up to the late 1980s, there was relatively little concern for environmental issues in Bangladesh. By the early 1990s, however, there was an environmental movement in place featuring the adverse impact of the Flood Action Plan, shrimp cultivation and government forestry programs, among others. Concern about environmental degradation created a new basis for solidarity and organization. A whole new movement came into being with its roots among the victims of ecological devastation but drawing increasing support from the professional groups, the media and the international environmental and human rights lobby. The environmental movement added an additional dimension to civil society in Bangladesh. It also poses an ideological challenge to the dominant notion of development. Here I discuss environmental movements against shrimp cultivation and the

Flood Action Plan in the country.

Shrimp cultivation in southern parts of the country is known to have caused adverse environmental impact in the area. Violent social conflicts have been unleashed which illustrate how the social forces in civil society can respond to environmental degradation and its resultant adverse implications. In polders 22 and 29 in Greater Khulna, shrimp culture and associated saline waterlogging have been resisted through popular mobilization with support from an NGO (Nijera Kori), unlike adjacent polders, where shrimp growing has become predominant. However, in November 1990, there was a violent attack by shrimp growing business interests on landless groups of polder 22 in Paikghacha union in Khulna. The landless people protested strongly against an invasion of more than 100 people organized by shrimp landlord Wazed Ali to encroach land. Guns and bombs were used to attack the local populace by the shrimp growing businessmen and their men. Local men and women united and resisted them. One local woman, Karuna Sardar, a member of a landless women's group, was killed and many other locals were wounded (Sangbad:November 20, 1990).

A similar attack was made on another landless group in polder number 20 in Paikghacha of Greater Khulna on 9th January 1991. Several of the landless group members were seriously injured (Adnan 1991:72). As Atiur Rahman states,

"the state at the local level especially police, has been aiding the powerful groups" (Rahman 1993:6). In another incident, Hasnat Kabir Kallol documents the killing of Sheikh Jaber Ali, Union Council member of number 7 Amirpur union under Bhatiaghata police station on September 21, 1995 by a gher owner who owns a number of large shrimp fields in Bhatiaghata (Kallol 1995:8). He found that the locals, especially women, have demonstrated their strong protest and hostility to non-local shrimp cultivators. Kallol observes,

The striking point of the anti-shrimp cultivation movement is the vast participation of women. Women are no longer unconscious about their economic fate and social repression. The present movement against the gher organizers and outrageous local police administration makes them conscious, united and determined to reach their desired goal (Kallol 1995:8).

An integrated environmental and socio-economic impact assessment of shrimp cultivation is yet to be undertaken in spite of its noted environmental effects and ensuing violence in society. As environmental groups warn, the importance of earning foreign currency should be weighed against the social and economic cost involved in shrimp production and export. There is a need to strike a balance between the paramount consideration of social equity and the need for higher income and sustainability of the resource base.

The project initiators should have far greater concern for the likely impact of the project and take steps to remove anomalies in the leasing arrangements. They should also take

a tougher attitude against those who violate lease contracts and impose violence on the local people. Of course this can happen only when the local state machinery becomes more responsive to people's problems. Let us now look at how the Flood Action Plan generated controversies and contradictions in society.

As seen from our earlier discussion, the FAP was a very large enterprise. When all the FAP projects were presented at a national FAP conference in early March 1992, there arose considerable apprehension in different quarters about the viability of such a huge effort, its impact on the environment and the people. In the course of time, Bangladeshi NGOs became involved. In May 1992, a group of women associated with the Unnavan Shohojogy Team (UST), an NGO in Gala Union, launched a demonstration procession at the FAP 20 headquarters in Tangail town. The women's groups organized a protest march when they felt their opinions, though solicited, were being ignored by the FAP 20 project. Harry Blair, in analyzing the movement, observes that, "it is difficult to imagine either the canvass or the procession occurring even a few years ago in rural Bangladesh" (Blair 1994:7). In September 1993, a much bigger demonstration took place in Tangail in which a number of NGOs participated, drawing in people from outside the areas as well as local citizens to demonstrate against the adverse effects of FAP.

But well before the September 1993 demonstration, concern about the FAP in general and the FAP 20 in particular had spread to European NGOs, especially environmental NGOs based in the Netherlands, which along with Germany was a co-sponsor of FAP 20. Netherlands based NGOs especially put sufficient pressure on the Dutch parliament that a special investigation was launched into the FAP, with a special focus on FAP 20 (IOV 1993). In May 1993 several European NGOs organized a conference on the FAP in Strasbourg, France, which featured some heavy criticism of FAP 20 and in the following October, another European conference was held in Berlin. There was obviously NGO pressure both in Bangladesh and Europe to consider environmental issues and issues of popular participation in the FAP process.

There was also environmental activism on the legal front. The Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA) involved itself in both class action and public interest suits against the Government of Bangladesh to put pressure on the government to be accountable. In its class action efforts, BELA represented land owners whose holdings have been acquired by the government for FAP activities and the Jamuna Bridge Project. On the public interest side, BELA adopted a target of opportunity approach to hound the Government of Bangladesh on environmental issues. BELA threatened legal action against FAP 20 for carrying out infra-structural activities in violation

of water sector statutes (Harry Blair 1994:43).

These activities and concerns significantly widened the debate on environmental issues in Bangladesh by placing the topic firmly on the public policy agenda. As a consequence, the institutions of the government now find themselves the subject of scrutiny by such organizations in civil society as BELA, ADAB (Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh), CEN (Coalition of Environmental NGOs), certain NGOs, women's organizations, various grassroots and people's organizations and by the masses in general. They know that such organizations in civil society are monitoring their activities and they feel a pressure to justify and be accountable for their actions that they did not feel even a few years ago.

The controversy over environmental issues has widened the public debate and has put the environment on the public agenda as a sector deserving serious debate. The environment has emerged as a sector in which today a number of disparate voices are heard, whereas only a few years ago it was a sector resounding only to a harmonious duet of bureaucrats and supportive donors. These disparate voices are responses in civil society in the country against unsustainable development projects which not only bring about environmental degradation, but also have class/gender differential impact.

c) NGOS AS GRASSROOTS SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS

NGOs enter discussions about social movements and civil society in different ways. For some scholars, interest in NGOs has been stimulated primarily by a search for new and more efficient ways of achieving relatively orthodox goals of development (Esman and Uphoff 1984). Another group of scholars rely on a post-Marxist position, for whom interest in NGOs has been inspired by deeper questions asked of existing models. They question the dominance of economistic thinking in definitions of development and argue that development should be more participatory, diverse and inclusive than in the past. They have argued for development to be reoriented so as to respect these concerns. Within this school of thought, NGOs' role as grassroots support organizations has received particular attention as a force for the consolidation of civil society (Carroll 1992, Friedmann 1992, Lehmann 1990). Drawing on the insights of the latter perspective I consider the NGOs which act as grassroots support organizations in Bangladesh as part of civil society along with many other actors.

The experiences of NGOs in various regions of the developing world have been diverse and varied and cannot be generalized. Here I shall focus on the NGO experience in Bangladesh and specifically on how it has facilitated movement

at the grassroots.² Prior to independence in 1971, only a few NGOs operated in the then East Pakistan. However, NGOs emerged on a large scale in Bangladesh after the liberation war of 1971 (which is quite early compared to many Southern countries) to undertake relief and rehabilitation activities to mitigate the sufferings of the war torn population. Presently, development NGOs operate in more than 50 percent of the villages in Bangladesh involving over 3.5 million families (ADAB 1994). There are presently over 600 registered NGOs that could be called developmental in Bangladesh, out of a total of approximately 13,000 registered (Sel Glaser et al. 1993:3, quoted in Blair 1994:15).

It needs to be noted here that the emergence of the early development NGOs in Bangladesh was not just a reflection of a gap in analysis and policy, or even primarily of the growing awareness among concerned Bangladeshi observers about the dimensions of poverty. The political conditions in the aftermath of liberation in 1971 were crucial. The long period of authoritarian rule severely restricted the opportunity of political parties to openly espouse the interests of the poor against the vested interests of those dominating the state. In such a delicate political equation, the development NGOs played an increasingly crucial role. Also, many foreign NGOs, which were born out of the attempt to reconstruct Europe after the war, had an orientation towards relief work and became

involved or provided support to the local NGOs in their reconstruction efforts. Thus the origin of development NGOs may be attributed to a combination of factors -- repression of formal, radical and progressive politics, a generation of young activists with political values and courage, shaped by their experiences during the struggle for liberation from Pakistani domination and the availability of donor support (Wood 1994:485).

The activities of the majority of NGOs in Bangladesh are based on the twin strategies of income generation activities³ combined with "conscientization" programs aimed at developing the potential of poor people to challenge existing inequalities through education, organization and mobilization. The NGO initiative in establishing income generating activities proved to be an effective alternative to top-down government rural works programs, but the extremely low rates of return on such activities have caused many to question their long term sustainability. In fact, some NGOs in Bangladesh reject the idea of providing credit for income generation activities in favor of organizing the landless to strengthen control over assets such as land, forests and water bodies and strengthening their claims on government services. These NGOs (Nijera Kori, UBINIG, Saptagram, GSS) describe the goal of their work as conscientization and assisting the poor form autonomous and self-managed social organizations. These

NGOs put great emphasis on a holistic approach and see themselves in tension with state structures. At times, they also find themselves in conflict with the donors. Emphasis on conscientization has led to intense and sustained pressure group action in many places to confront social injustice and oppression by rural elites and touts. Many NGOs (BRAC, Proshika) continue to combine both approaches (BRAC, Proshika), arguing that there are important social benefits to income generating activities over and above its direct economic value, primarily in the case of rural women (Lewis 1993:51).

Two broad approaches may be discerned in analyzing NGOs in Bangladesh. One view perceives NGOs in playing an important role in strengthening the grassroots. James Riker documents that NGOs have generally played significant micro-development policy advocacy, as well as humanitarian roles in Bangladesh (Riker 1990). A number of studies have focussed on the innovative rural development approaches developed by indigenous NGOs in Bangladesh in the areas of family planning, primary health care and rural credit (Abed 1984, Khan 1984, Khanna 1984, Huda 1987, Sanyal 1987, Khan 1988, Lovell 1992, Wood and Palmer Jones 1990). John Clark in his study on NGOs observes, "over the last two decades the NGO sector in Bangladesh, like in many other places in the world, has performed as a major actor in facilitating the process of

institution building of the poor at the grassroots" (Clark 1991). Similarly, in analyzing NGOs' roles in Bangladesh, Peter Gillespie argues that NGOs are not simply mechanisms for the delivery of social welfare services, but rather, NGOs are engaged in a fundamental political process aimed at transforming social and economic relations. He observes,

The NGOs are involved in the creation of people's organizations, community based groups and other forms of democratic social institutions through which the poor can develop the collective voice and confidence to advance their interests. NGOs are engaged in the elemental task of building civil society (Gillespie 1991:197).

Anisur Rahman argued that NGOs can play an important role in ensuring the involvement of the grassroots people and empowering them (1993:12). His study found that NGOs at the grassroots helped to enhance consciousness of poor rural women in particular and this process gave birth to new forms of empowerment in society (1993:16). The Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, a quasi NGO, is often given as an example of how collective organizations among small groups can lead to empowerment among the rural poor, and in particular women, sufficient to effect a "restructuring" of intra and extra-household relations (Rahman 1994, Wahid 1993).

If seen in a generational perspective developed by David Korten (1991) ⁴, NGOs in Bangladesh are now in the third stage of their growth. In the late 1970s, there occurred a gradual shift from the first generation strategies, (i.e.

relief and welfare services), to the second generation strategies characterized by small scale, self-reliant local development initiatives for building people's capacity. Throughout the 1980s, this thrust continued. The third generation strategies focused on sustainable system development -- policy changes at different levels in favor of greater local control and initiatives. According to Korten

such NGOs replace their service-delivery role by a catalytic one facilitating development by other organizations, both public and private of the capacities, linkages and commitments required to address their designated needs on a sustained basis (Korten 1987:149).

Korten however suggests that mature NGOs can accommodate all three orientations thus locating themselves in all generations simultaneously. A recent phenomenon visible since the early 1990s is characterized by a shift in emphasis from reform to transformational activity and people's movement. This appears to be the first indication of a fourth generation of NGO strategy. From the above account it appears that in Bangladesh, NGOs have played a significant micro-level development, policy advocacy, as well as humanitarian role.

On the other hand, there has long been a view on the left in Bangladesh that NGO programs are essentially donor driven, have only a limited impact in development terms and are best equipped only to deliver inputs. NGOs have been criticized as reproducing only new systems of patronage (Hashemi 1990, White 1991) and as imperialist agents to stifle class-struggle (Umar

1989). Despite the radical rhetoric, it is argued, many of the NGOs are now simply serving the needs of the donors to expand into small enterprise and credit organizations. In this critique, the earlier welfare approach gave way briefly to conscientization and mobilization one, before being drawn back towards non-confrontational working methods composed mainly of credit delivery. According to Hashemi,

in the twin approaches of income generation and conscientization, the latter has now become a blunt instrument for challenging the structural roots of rural poverty and oppression of the poor and exists along with the concept of participation mainly at the level of rhetoric" (Hashemi 1990).

These scholars argue that targeting the poor does not necessarily bypass the powerful, because the latter groups have infiltrated the NGOs. They argue that NGO operations have created a new class of aided and patronized poor who are slightly elevated from the masses.

However, the diversity of NGOs makes both types of generalizations rather difficult. Although it is recognized in this dissertation that some NGOs are primarily engaged in relieving the immediate consequences of poverty and have given little attention to questions of development theory or vision, other NGOs have played a catalytic role in ensuring the involvement of the people at the grassroots level. A direct link with the grassroots, in contrast with the overly bureaucratized governmental sector has given the NGOs

necessary insights in order to deal with social problems and inequalities. Many NGOs using their grassroots experience have begun responding to the development needs of the poor and have achieved relative success in enabling the poor to participate in the development process. I think that in this way these NGOs are facilitating the responses in civil society to unsustainable development practices of the government.

Some of these NGOs have also played a critical role in giving greater voice to environmental concerns, gender concerns, human rights as well as for more accountable and democratic institutions. Their role in mobilizing grassroots movement is important in the organization of social forces in civil society. If considered in the context of Korten's "generational" perspective, it may be noted that these NGOs in Bangladesh have been relatively more successful in making the transition to third generation strategy of sustainable systems development. This may be partly attributed to the weakness of other civil society institutions in the country. These NGOs filled in the gap created by long years of repressive state policies which hindered the strengthening of civil society in Bangladesh in other forms.

Now, I focus on three national development NGOs in Bangladesh, Nijera Kori (doing it on one's own), UBINIG (policy research for development alternatives) and Proshika (human development center for training and education). These

NGOs may be seen as facilitators, working with the rural poor to strengthen the capacity of grassroots organizations to identify their needs and meet them from their own resources or by demanding a response from the state. These NGOs play an innovative role in developing new approaches to natural resource related technologies and management practices and have consciously made attempts to link gender and environmental concerns in some of their programs. Such initiatives have generated popular bases of support which threaten the legitimacy of rural elites and challenge government defined notions of development.

a) NIJERA KORI'S 'CONSCIENTIZATION' PROGRAM AGAINST SHRIMP CULTIVATION

Nijera Kori originated in late 1974, when a Norwegian woman, Elizabeth Helsing, working with the World Food Program (WFP) in Dhaka, started a training program to rehabilitate some of the destitute women victims of the floods in 1974. Training was given in sericulture (a form of mulberry culture) to these destitute women, who later got employment in different organizations. Gradually the program expanded and changed its focus from service delivery and a relief-oriented role to conscientizing the rural masses to form their own organizations through which they can safeguard their interests and rights, and articulate their protests against injustices.

In 1979, some women who were working in a Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO) project joined Nijera Kori, and in 1980 members of other NGOs also joined the organization. Gradually Nijera Kori grew into an organization addressing need-based programs and activities at the field level. The head office of Nijera Kori is based in Dhaka, but they have organizations all over the country. According to the 1992 Annual Report of Nijera Kori, about 4,853 villagers have gained basic training out of which fifty two percent are women and forty eight percent are men (Annual report 1992:5). Nijera Kori raises funds for their own full time workers and administration from funding agencies. However, Nijera Kori prefers to give moral and social support instead of credit inputs to strengthen the grassroots.

Although it is a middle level NGO and does not have numerous projects, Nijera Kori has made an impact nationally because of the issues it stands for and its extremely effective approach in mobilizing and conscientizing the rural poor against the social impact of unsustainable development practices.

Nijera Kori has a special focus on women. According to Rasheda Begum of Nijera Kori,

The problems of women are part of a socio-economic and political structure and can be tackled by tackling this structure. The two struggles -- one between the classes and the other between the sexes -- have to go on simultaneously. Both women and men have to recognize that

there are contradictions between the sexes, that women suffer both from poverty and patriarchy and that oppressed men often play the oppressors vis a vis the women in their own class (Interview, May 1994).

Begum's argument is in line with the general argument of this thesis that women in Bangladesh are subject to the subordinating effects of both class and gender differentiation. Gender structures in society influence class structures, and isolating one from the other leads to a failure in comprehending the complexity of the interrelationship. In their conscientizing process, Nijera Kori criticizes the patriarchal structures prevalent in rural societies. This makes women more conscious of their rights and position in society and empowers them to take action against wrongs.

Although Nijera Kori initially worked only with women, gradually they began working also with men because they felt it was important to organize and conscientize the men who also were being oppressed in class terms. Although Nijera Kori now works with both men and women among the rural poor, they continue to organize separate groups in which special interests and issues of both genders are taken up. Training programs incorporate discussions of class and gender relations within both men's and women's groups. But at every other level of decision-making, men and women have joint committees and plan and work together on common issues. The development

endeavor of Nijera Kori is concentrated on supporting the empowerment of the majority of the poor, who are denied access to any effective development efforts. Empowerment of the rural poor is the key philosophy of Nijera Kori. Their main objective is to help the rural poor, particularly landless laborers, poor fisherfolk and artisans to form their own organizations through which they can safeguard their interests and rights. By living with the people in the communities, the Nijera Kori organizers help them analyze their own situation and to realize that their strength lies in their numbers and that therefore they must unite. By raising social consciousness among the people, it helps them solve their own problems.

Nijera Kori follows an integrated approach. It does not have a specific environmental program, and neither are environmental issues taken up as specific projects. Their focus is mainly on awareness creation about environmental issues. Environmental awareness is imparted to group members and trainees, making them conscious about the impact of environmental degradation on the rural poor, especially women. For example, they make people aware of the impact of the unregulated use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers in agriculture and encourage peasants to adopt ecological agricultural practices. The outcome of this awareness building is also reflected in the protest movements by Nijera Kori

group members against environmentally harmful development projects in different parts of the country.

Khushi Kabir, coordinator of the organization, was of the opinion that,

people at the grassroots, especially rural women, experience negative consequences due to unsustainable development projects. Because of this, rural women are more aware and more conscious about the linkage of gender and environment and are more eager to take initiative in protesting or fighting such consequences (Interview May 1994).

She further stated that the initiative and drive for linking gender and environmental concerns in Bangladesh, comes from rural women who are very much aware and conscious about the environment which is often a livelihood issue for them. For this reason women are taking the lead in protest movements against environmental degradation. To her, the environmental sustainability and regeneration have real meaning in the rural context in Bangladesh and women play a very important role in it. Women live with the situation and obviously have a better capacity to identify the main barriers to unsustainable development practices and suggest what needs to be done (Interview, May 1994). Nijera Kori group members strongly protested against the adverse effects of shrimp cultivation in Southern Bangladesh, the consequences of waterlogging in Saal Dakatia and against the environmental consequences of the World Bank coordinated Flood Action Plan (FAP) in Tangail.

The organization works with the belief that development

that benefits the poorest are possible only through the involvement of this class of people in the mainstream of development. "No development effort can be effective if it is imposed from the above" says Khushi Kabir of Nijera Kori. She states that,

Nijera Kori acts as an initiator of a process whereby people themselves will play the major role both in planning, policy formation and its implementation which requires strong self reliant organizations of the poor (Interview: May 1994).

So the primary objective of Nijera Kori is to support and build strong people's organization. In this context they may be considered a grassroots support organization which helps mobilize responses in civil society to oppressive structures.

Groups are formed by Nijera Kori workers with the most deprived section of people, who are encouraged to identify and solve their problems together. Emphasis is placed on enhancing group understanding of the underlying causes of the problems they face and promoting confidence in possibilities for change through concerted action. Kabir observes,

the poor people know they are poor, deprived and oppressed, but often they do not want to confront the situation. Many of them think the problems they face are their individual problems and they can do nothing to change the situation. By getting the people to look at their problems collectively we help them see the commonality of their problems and to understand the structures which are oppressing them. We want the people to ask for their share, to insist on their rights (Interview May 1994).

The poor landless people, after being organized and

reaching a certain stage of awareness, develop a strong voice concerning a particular social problem and act in united form against all odds and the extreme forms of pressure put on them by the vested interested class of people. They learn to cooperate together on all issues with or without the help of the organization. In many areas they are beginning to be recognized as an alternative force, particularly where issue based movements of the landless people organized by Nijera Kori are very strong (Annual Report 1991:11).

For example, Nijera Kori played a very important role in conscientizing the local people in shrimp cultivation areas in Khulna district against the environmentally harmful effects of the industry and its class/gender differential impact. This illustrates the strength of Nijera Kori in raising environmental consciousness and its social impact among the rural people in Bangladesh. The adverse environmental consequences of shrimp cultivation and its impact on gender was discussed in Chapter Four. The responses in civil society to such environmental consequences and their gender/class differential impact were also discussed earlier in this chapter.

As we have seen, shrimp cultivation not only has adverse environmental impact, it also generates social contradictions. The primary beneficiaries of shrimp culture have been the non-local leaseholders and a few of the local influential people.

The local poor people had been alienated from this enterprise as the outsider leaseholders did not trust or employ local landless people but brought in their own loyal workers from outside. Also, most of the ghers constructed for the purpose of shrimp cultivation did not follow the standard design and government rules and regulations. This had adverse consequences for ecological balance of the rural environment and effected local social structures. These practices brought with them a number of vulnerabilities among the rural poor, particularly among women, who were the most marginalized in that area. It contributed to widespread social conflicts between the rural poor people and the shrimp cultivators.

On November 1990, a number of group members of Nijera Kori, the majority of them women, organized a protest movement against shrimp projects in polder number 22 in Paikghacha upazila in Khulna, which were having harmful effects on the people. There were serious attempts to undermine such popular mobilizations. A violent attack was launched by the powerful shrimp farmers on the landless groups of this polder on November 7, 1990. A female group member, Karunamoyee Sarder was killed when she, along with other group members were protesting against the forceful encroachment in the area. The people of Wazed Ali, a powerful shrimp farmer, who was a leaseholder from outside that locality illegally encroached the land in that polder despite government declaration

prohibiting shrimp projects there. The people of polder number 22, organized by Nijera Kori, continued their movement against such practice. They demanded immediate steps to be taken against the harmful shrimp projects.

On November 19, 1991, the group members closed the canal, in protest, through which saline water enters into the dam which adversely affects surrounding croplands. The owner of the ghers filed a case against these landless people. About two hundred landless group members of Nijera Kori held up the upazila office and demanded the withdrawal of the case. Nijera Kori expressed their moral support for the local people. On account of their legal demand, the upazila administration released all the convicts on bail. This incident illustrates how shrimp culture and associated saline water logging have been resisted in this area through popular mobilization with NGO support. Consequently, the agricultural and ecological systems have not been undermined, and crop production, vegetation cover and livestock rearing have been able to persist unhampered, unlike adjacent polders where shrimp growing has become predominant. Farmers of the surrounding areas have expressed their enthusiasm about getting comparable projects established in their own areas (polders). Group action mostly by female members of Nijera Kori groups has been successful in tackling the power structure in Khulna which favors shrimp cultivators. This conscientization program of

Nijera Kori may be seen as an example of how collective organizations among small groups can lead to empowerment among the rural poor and in particular women, sufficient to effect a restructuring of the power structure. In highlighting the role of Nijera Kori, Rasheda Begum, a senior staff member observed that,

Nijera Kori has been instrumental in building up the awareness among people about the environmental impacts of shrimp cultivation project which helped them to mobilize and protest strongly against such projects (Interview: May 1994).

However, such attempts at restructuring the power structure at the local level manifest the violent conflicts that arise in society. It is evident that environmental issues are by no means unrelated to institutional questions involving conflicts of interest between different socio-economic groups. Nijera Kori group members still face the consequences of such kinds of unsustainable development practices and have to constantly fight for their rights. It also demonstrates how important environmental protection is to the rural people in the area. That women have taken the lead in these protest movements illustrates that gender specific impacts have made the women in the area conscious about their rights for protesting against environmental degradation and environmentally unsustainable development projects.

b) UBINIG'S "ECOLOGICAL AGRICULTURE" PROJECT

UBINIG (Policy Research for Development Alternatives) is known mainly as a research and policy advocacy organization which combines research and field level practice. It was established in 1984 and has gradually evolved into an advocacy organization both at the national and international level, deliberating on the issues of food security, ecology, genetic resources, gender issues and biodiversity. UBINIG spends a considerable amount of time in campaigning its ideas and interacting at the policy level. It is connected to many international networks and regularly participates in UN sponsored conventions and conferences. In a few villages of Bangladesh, its members are actively working with the people with regard to specific and broad issues of their struggle. UBINIG has rejected the notion of "development" as it is understood in the mainstream texts as well as in its liberal or pseudo critical version such as 'alternative development' (Farida Akhter 1994:3). They see development activities as an external intervention in people's lives. Their aim is an "alternative to development" which means to transcend the linear, monolithic and categorical notion of social progress (Farida Akhter 1994:6). Farida Akhter of UBINIG observes,

the unique experience we went through is our efforts from the beginning to move from abstract opposition to concrete resistance. And then from concrete resistance to critical and strategic engagement against a global process we believe we must and can change From our inception we insisted to remain critical including of our own pet ideas and ideologies (F.Akhter 1994:3).

UBINIG's approach to gender, class and environmental concern is closer to the alternative development perspectives discussed in Chapter Three. The theoretical basis of such an approach calls for transformations of the dominant development paradigm.

UBINIG does not separate men and women in their policies and programs. According to Natasha Ahmed of UBINIG,

Development is not possible only with women. Both men and women are part of an integrated approach. Women's questions cannot be separated from the overall struggle. However, special emphasis on women is needed because women are lagging behind due to traditional development practices which subordinated women (Interview, May 1994).

At UBINIG, women play a decisive role in every sphere of action. All UBINIG group members, both male and female, fight against "patriarchy" in any of its manifestations. They reject the thesis that men are inherently superior and likewise also reject the assumption that women are inherently good, submissive, nurturing and caring. What is more important to their approach is that men and women are social and historical beings with unique experiences.

That UBINIG perceives things from a holistic perspective is evident from discussions below of its ecological agricultural project in Tangail. The staff members feel that there is so much interlinkage among issues that it becomes difficult to separate one from the other. Environmental concerns form part of their integrated approach.

UBINIG does not exclude and isolate the environment as a separate issue. Environmental awareness is imparted continuously in their training programs. Specific issues such as biodiversity, soil fertility, water management, forest regeneration, and protection of forest resources are addressed in their awareness raising programs. UBINIG has also been involved in studies and research to identify processes which are ecologically sustainable. They involve farmers, both men and women, pay specific attention to the needs of women, look into the specific quality of land and soil, natural resources and socio-economic conditions of their particular work area before developing and implementing policies and strategies best-suited for the community's management of natural resources. While visiting their project on ecological agriculture in Patrail Union of Delduar upazila in Tangail, I found that within their integrated approach, they have successfully linked gender and environmental concerns.

Ecological agriculture, more popularly known as Nayakrishi (the movement for new way of agriculture) started after the devastating floods in 1988. The Patrail Union of Delduar upazila belonging to Tangail district in Bangladesh, where UBINIG was working with the weavers in 22 villages, went under a few feet of water for 15 days which left its scar on the economy, society and the cultural fabric of the area. Irreparable damage was caused to the agricultural sector of

the union. The entire amount of standing crops was damaged and the farmers lost the seed beds prepared for next crop. Large farm holders had fewer problems because their houses were already made on high land and seeds were stored on high shelves, beyond the reach of the flood water. But the poor and marginal farmers were affected differently as they did not have such an opportunity to save the seeds (Akhter 1994:18). In response, UBINIG started working with farmers, especially the poor and the marginalized who are the majority in these rural communities, and mobilized them to take collective decisions and actions on how to plan for the next crop and engage in ecological agriculture.

UBINIG believes that ecological agriculture or organic farming is an option for small farmers in Bangladesh who are caught in the vicious cycle of mechanized farming. The majority of the poor farmers plant expensive, commercially produced seeds from large multinational seed companies. The seeds are hybrid varieties, industrially produced and are not adapted to Bangladesh's soil and climate. So, they require chemical fertilizers and pesticides to grow. Many farmers are forced into debt because they have to spend the cash they earn with their crop on these expensive fertilizers and pesticides. One study found that the commercial seed varieties are only good for one planting and they do not germinate and produce seeds which are suited to be planted the subsequent year.

These seeds lose fifty percent of the fertility in the second planting (Green 1994:2).

Due to the spread of modern agriculture and High Yield Variety (HYV) technology and associated proliferation of the use of pesticides and fertilizers as well as ground water irrigation, the organic content of most of the soil in Bangladesh has become alarmingly low. According to Farhad Mazhar, Managing Director of UBINIG,

the promoters of modern agriculture are systematically ignoring the environmental and ecological issues of Bangladesh. The situation of Bangladesh agriculture alarmingly demands an alternative path of agricultural development (Interview, May 1994).

However, he strongly feels that promoting ecological agriculture to ensure food security and sustainability at the policy level is a difficult task in Bangladesh. It is doubly difficult because there are virtually no activities or research on alternative farming practices. Advocacy network at the national level is only recently taking shape (Interview May 1994). He was of the opinion that, in this scenario, it is imperative to promote ecological agriculture at the village farm level and gather experiences to propose policy options and alternative strategies for sustainable development.

In its project area in Patrail union, UBINIG has focused around the biomass based productive interaction of the community with nature to grow food, fodder, fuel wood and various basic needs. Ecological farming practices are promoted

on the farmer's land. Poultry and livestock rearing, fish culture, homestead gardening and other activities are integrated with agriculture for a viable ecological system. In some cases, there are also instances of weaving activities (which is a predominant occupation in the area) being integrated with agricultural activities.

UBINIG imparts training to the local people about the organic method of gathering and processing kitchen and farm materials into compost, which is used as fertilizer instead of the harsh urea-based fertilizer. They also give training in seed conservation and seed storing for preserving the genetic diversity of food supplies. They think that local seed varieties are ideally suited for local conditions and the dietary and health needs of the people.

In their training and network activities, special attention is given to women. I found that in the Patrail Union women were more keen than men for ecological agriculture. One woman in the area said that "modern agricultural practices displaced them from their once commanding role in the area of horticulture, seed preservation, animal husbandry and poultry and livestock rearing" (Sayeeda Begum interview: May 1994). Another woman was of the opinion that depending on one type of crop (rice or wheat) and chemical fertilizer and pesticide use in such crops affects their health negatively (Maleka Banu; interview: May 1994). Women in rural areas are conscious about

the linkage of environmental concerns and gender concerns and are generally willing to adopt sustainable developmental activities. Natasha Ahmed of UBINIG observes, "UBINIG is instrumental in creating such awareness among rural women and are strongly supporting ecological agricultural practices" (Interview; May 1994). She thinks that there is an important linkage between gender and the environment, especially in the rural areas in Bangladesh. In agriculture, seed collection, tree plantation, pisciculture and homestead gardening among others, both men and women have different roles and face differential impacts, which are usually not brought out in studies or properly documented. The linkage of gender and the environment is often overlooked or down-played. From her experience in working with these people, she feels that there is an urgent need to bring it up and to articulate its importance (Interview, May 1994).

Farmers who have taken up organic farming in Patrail union have stopped using chemical fertilizers and pesticides. They use compost as fertilizer. Jute seed powder, neem leaves and neem oil are used to control pests. The farmers in such farms practice multiple cropping. Instead of a dependence on rice, lentils, jute and mustard are also grown in the area. The UBINIG workers and the farmer community frequently have discussions and meetings where important issues are taken up, such as improving soil fertility, the importance of water

management, dissemination of information, problems of drinking water, the importance of crop rotation, mixed cropping, composting, green manuring, specific needs and the problems of women. A great deal of research is undertaken in both UBINIG headquarters at Dhaka and on the farms. UBINIG, however, does not believe in imposing methods and strategies from above. They feel that through a joint process of learning, farmers and extension workers of UBINIG can develop new and more adapted methods of land use.

By organizing the peasants, UBINIG holds regular meetings to get a deeper understanding of environmental problems in the area and its class and gender differential impact. A number of problems and implications of HYV cultivation were identified through such discussions and the need for reorganizing the agricultural activities became deeper. The group members took a position against green revolution technologies, which, according to them, not only brought environmental degradation, but were interventionist in nature and were introduced with the coercive imposition of the state. UBINIG's approach to floods can be contrasted with government's and donors response in making multi-million dollar embankments in spite of their adverse environmental consequences and class/gender differential impacts. According to Farhad Mazhar,

Despite damages and losses, people of Patrail never considered flood as something destructive. They have always seen flood as a replenisher of soil. Flood water

brings with it the rich alluvium that contributes for a healthy crop in the following season. Flood is seen as a part and parcel of agriculture. Rather, their primary concern was about the adverse impact created by modern agriculture (Interview; June 1994).

The example of ecological agriculture in Tangail illustrates that rural people in the area have developed coping strategies, which minimize physical and economic damage in a way which does not necessitate major infra-structural construction and consequent environmental damage. It may be argued that giving greater attention and support to those activities could bring many of the intended benefits to those most in need without massive economic and environmental cost.

In a paper presented at the Roundtable Session of the World Congress of Sociology, Farida Akhter of UBINIG observes,

Nayakrishi or ecological agriculture is not a matter of introducing new agricultural technology based on organic methods friendly with ecology and environment. It is not only techniques to introduce composting, green manuring, multicropping, integration of nitrogen fixing trees, etc. It is a part of our searching for ways to transform and reconstruct the community on new relations and values. It is a struggle to create new visions for a new mode of living, new way of interacting and relating with each other (F.Akhter: 1994:17).

Similarly, Farhad Mazhar, Managing Director of UBINIG states, "Ecological agriculture is not a project for UBINIG it is a way of life. It redefines the development model so far pursued nationally" (Interview, May 1994). In their redefinition of sustainable agriculture, UBINIG has learned

from and used the traditional knowledge base of village farmers both men and women. In designing their programs, local cultures and lifestyles of the local people, both men and women, have been viewed in their full complexity. They have also been sensitive to and linked gender concerns for developing a sustainable approach to ecological agricultural farming. They believe that change of farming practices can never be successful if women are not involved in decision-making and implementation in every stage. Although such farming is only beginning to be popularized and much research and experience is needed to improve it, it is apparent that ecological agriculture has the potential to be sustainable.

c) PROSHIKA'S SOCIAL FORESTRY PROGRAM

Proshika Manobik Unnayan Kendra (PMUK) was founded in 1976 by social workers trained in BRAC, who decided to concentrate mainly on human development training. These workers were politically motivated and radically inclined youth, many of whom were experienced in working as freedom fighters in the rural areas during the war of independence in 1971. The idea of returning to the rural poor appealed to them and inspired them with a sense of mission (Chowdhury 1989 :111). Although it began as a project of CUSO, as part of the national reconstruction effort which took place after the war of independence in 1971, Proshika quickly became an independent Bangladeshi organization (Khan et al. 1993:59).

Proshika evolved with two branches, one in Dhaka and one in Comilla, supported by core funding from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and continuing inputs from CUSO until the early eighties (Wood 1994:485). CIDA continues to support the two, now separate organizations of Proshika. My focus here is on Proshika Manobik Unnayan Kendra, based in Dhaka. Proshika is now the second largest NGO in Bangladesh and works with 23,252 informal groups with an average membership of 20 people in 3,415 villages in 26 of Bangladesh's districts; 11,637 of these are women's groups (Khan et al. 1993:59). Proshika believes that human development is a process, not a series of projects. It has been carrying out an alternative development endeavor to assist the poor to empower themselves, so that they can perform the leading role in changing their conditions. It has developed parallel approaches to addressing the material needs of the poor through income generating activities and facilitating 'conscientization' through participatory approaches to education, training and mobilization (Khan et al. 1993:59). According to Qazi Faruque Ahmed, Executive Director of Proshika,

for participatory development to be a reality, it is fundamental to let people reach a state, where they themselves can identify, analyze and devise creative solutions to the problems that engulf their lives. Proshika's role has been to build their capacity by organizing and mobilizing and through training, education, and various other support services, including

credit. Proshika's interventions and endeavor seek to develop the capacity of these rural and urban poor so that they become active participants in their own development (Interview; June 1994).

Proshika therefore aims to assist the poor in analyzing their structural position in society and identifying the means to improve it. Proshika believes that participation by local communities ensures that the programs and projects address the real needs and priority concerns of the local people.

Proshika implements a wide range of activities which are problem-focussed, need-based and geared towards facilitating access for the poor to public resources, services and institutions to enable them to gradually become self-reliant. Participants in the Proshika development process are the landless, marginal and small peasants, rural occupational working folks such as fishing communities, weavers, petty traders, urban slum dwellers and women from all these categories. Proshika has separate programs for women and for the environment, although there have been attempts to link the issues. Here I focus on Proshika's approach to social forestry, particularly its highly successful initiative to protect and regenerate degraded sal forests in Kaliakoir upazila in Gazipur district.

The primary objective of the social forestry program of Proshika is to create awareness among the poor about social, political, economic and environmental significance of the

forest resources and engage them in participatory management of forest protection and afforestation in denuded or degraded forests in collaboration with other participating organizations. Proshika has a long record of initiating reforestation projects in different parts of the country, many of which have been specifically targeted at women. They have records of remarkably successful programs on tree planting by their groups on roadside, embankments and other public lands. They also have groups living in and near the forests who have actively protected the forests from being cut and are now engaged in planting new trees (Saleemul Huq :1993:27).

Proshika Forest Protection Committees (formed by Proshika groups in the village) identify degraded forest area with remnants of sal coppice and protect this to allow forest to regenerate. The committee explains the objectives of protection to the villagers and requests their assistance. Conflicts with local people do arise, but are resolved at the local level through mediation. Sometimes the committees have thwarted hostilities created by the local elites and wood traders. Proshika's sal forestry protection through community involvement is an unique example in environmental mitigation efforts, and has proved to be a sustainable forest protection and management approach. The local people, especially the poor who were dependent on the forests for fuel, construction material and other forest products, felt the necessity of

protecting the forests against increasing deforestation. As a result, groups of landless poor, including women's groups of Proshika, got involved in the community forestry programs. According to Proshika, Shakipur and Mirzapur Area Development Center group members undertook 2,367 acres of degraded sal forest land for protection since 1985 (Annual Report 1993:48). The groups do not require any material input from Proshika, except policy support, guidance and advice in managing the program. The groups living in and near the sal forests have actively protected the forests from being cut and are now engaged in planting new trees.

Proshika has mobilized and organized rural poor in the area to improve their access to common property resources, which in practice are mediated by powerful interest groups in the rural power structure allied with local state representatives (Lewis 1993:54). The NGO has been working with groups of low income forest dwellers whose access to the sal forests in Tangail district (on which they depend for their livelihood) is being resisted by local elites. Sometimes, potentially violent conflicts are generated by confrontation between poor local men and women and the local power structure allied with local government officials (Lewis 1994:83). These conflicts manifest the contradictions between state policies and the local poor people's interests.

A memorandum of Agreement was signed in May 1992 between

Proshika and the Forest Department of the Government of Bangladesh to address the socio-economic problems related to deforestation as well as the burning need of afforestation in the sal forest areas. Approximately 4,282 group members of Sreepur, Bhuluka, Mirzapur, Shakipur and Kaliakoir Area Development Centers were involved in agroforestry and woodlot forestry projects in June 1993 (Annual Report 1993:47). Proshika has tried to coordinate with the Forest Department and take adequate measures to establish benefit sharing rights for the groups who are protecting the forests (Ali and Lai 1989). They have taken the initiative to remove the social constraints related to tenurial rights which Proshika believes is one of the major preconditions to create a positive environment for successful afforestation activities. However, the struggle to gain access to the sal forest in Gazipur District, which is vital to the subsistence of rural men and women of the area, has been a case of negotiation and confrontation by Proshika group members and Government Forest Department officials.

According to Iqbal Mahmud of Proshika, "Proshika has found itself encountering severe problems in dealing with the Forest Department of the Government of Bangladesh in its social forestry program" (Interview; June 1994). According to him, "the participatory forest management concept espoused by Proshika posed problems for a number of government officials

of the Forest Department, who had a patronage relationship with local elites" (interview : June 1994). Because of this conflict of interest, the government failed to cooperate effectively with Proshika's groups. Proshika's highly successful initiative to protect and regenerate depleted sal forests is not officially recognized by the Forest Department, nor is it replicated in other areas with similar problems and potentialities (Alim 1995:147).

During my field visit to Kaliakoir upazila in Gazipur district, a conversation with Majeda Khatun, a local rural woman who is also a Proshika group member, revealed that the local poor women of the area, with support from Proshika, attempted to develop a forest protection program in the area in early 1993. However, they were not able to lease rights in the forest resources directly with the Forest Department. Confrontation with local elites followed the women's initiative. According to her, these government owned resources were actually governed by intermediaries representing the interests of the local elites. The poor in the area were deprived of access to these resources (Interview; June 1994). Similar experiences have also been encountered in the roadside forestry projects of Proshika as confirmed by a staff member. These experiences bring into sharp focus the reality of local patronage relationships, class differentiation and gender relationships.

A study of Proshika's social forestry program by Khan et al. found that resolving the conflict of interests between the group members, the rural elites and the Forest Department calls for more challenging initiatives by government agencies. They also found that appropriate tenurial arrangements are essential prerequisites to successful social forestry programs (Khan et al. 1993:65).

An examination of Proshika's social forestry program demonstrates the importance the organization has attached to restructuring existing access relationships for poor people to common property resources. It also illustrates how the organization has been able to mobilize local women to identify the gender differential impact of environmental degradation and respond and fight for the protection of the environment and their access to common property resources. Proshika has played a protest and advocacy role to defend villagers rights to forest access in its social forestry program in Tangail and Gazipur districts of Bangladesh, rather than a passive role which accompanies service delivery by the state and many NGOs. They have initiated a process of challenging the prevailing power structures and advocating fundamental changes and restructuring.

Clearly, as long as the social forestry programs involve simply the extension of service to the rural poor or simply input delivery (i.e., tree planting, distribution of seeds and

training) mutually beneficial links are possible between governmental and non-governmental initiatives. As soon as the question of restructuring existing power structure at local level comes into question, problems arise which often lead to potentially violent conflicts in society. The government policies in this context are not responsive to changes which are conducive to sustainable development of the people and the environment. According to Lewis, the policies of the government,

combine short term exploitation of forest resources with restrictions on access which ignore the needs of the local people. The government strategy is based upon the substitution of natural forest with monoculture plantation of exotic imported species which do not cater to the subsistence needs of the poor, but instead serve the profit motive of the local rich (Lewis 1994:83).

This clearly illustrates that the government is reluctant to learn from the experience of NGOs which are working at the grassroots and are sensitive to the specific needs of men and women and their relationship to the environment.

As I have earlier stated, these NGOs are not representative of all NGOs in Bangladesh, and I am not arguing that they are the panacea to all the problems in the country. What is more important for this study is that the case studies of the programs of these three NGOs clearly manifest that the process of fundamental rethinking and restructuring of dominant development model has been initiated. These NGOs have

come a long way from their relief and welfare and service delivery activities which characterized most Bangladeshi NGOs in the 1970s. They have initiated a process of calling for transformations in unsustainable development practices. By challenging the underlying assumptions of development itself, they have provided inputs for a fundamental rethinking of the premises on which the dominant model of development is based. They question existing policy processes, the theories that currently inform them and their own past inclination to accept the government's leadership in setting the directions of national development policy with little question. In so doing, they are finding that they must deepen their own analysis of key development issues, in particular their analysis of why past policies and policy processes have failed and what alternative exist.

In contrast with the state's approach, the important contribution of these NGOs has been in conscientizing and mobilizing rural men and women, which has helped them to reflect and act on problems and issues that affect them. They have assisted local people at the grassroots level in defining and articulating the need for fundamental changes in the prevailing power structures that oppress them. These grassroots people, though often marginalized and oppressed in the development process, are at the same time striving to carve out alternative realities in solving their problems.

Equally important in this process is the interlinking of gender and environmental concerns. Not only have these NGOs become more gender, class and environment sensitive in their approach, but the importance of linking these issues is also reflected in their programs. They believe that the issues are so intertwined that no single sector can be successfully isolated in a development program or project.

NOTES

1 Although movements at the grassroots include peasant movements and movements of the landless, the focus here is on the women's and environmental movements.

2 NGOs have different orientations and concentrate on different areas of activities. The ones which are primarily involved in development work are commonly known as development NGOs or non-governmental development organizations (NGDO). This dissertation focuses on indigenous development NGOs in Bangladesh. With development NGOs there are diverse and plural approaches, strategies, sectoral program components and interventions. Most of the development NGOs favor an integrated development approach combining various programs. Although most of these NGOs work with both men and women, they do run specific programs aimed exclusively at women or at organizing separate women's groups. Most of the NGOs do not have an explicit environmental program but often have programs on environment related issues. However, few NGOs can be found which link gender and environmental concerns in their projects and programs.

3 Many NGOs prioritized non land-based sources of income generation for the landless, an area which had been substantially neglected by government. These income generation activities, which are important to the survival strategies of poor led to a concentration of efforts on small scale, homestead-based income generation activities, such as cattle and poultry rearing, food processing, social forestry, apiculture and rural handicrafts combined with provision of formal credit, to which the landless had previously been denied access.

4 David C. Korten (1987, 1990) classified NGOs on the basis of distinctive orientations in programming strategy. He identifies four orientations categorizing them into four generations 1) relief and welfare, 2) small scale self reliant development 3) sustainable system development and 4) people's movements.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

I began this study with the objective of analyzing how and why the state in Bangladesh has been unable to interconnect class, gender and environmental concerns in its development interventions, and how civil society has responded to such an inability. Understanding the dynamics of interaction between state and civil society was the guiding principle throughout the study. I have argued that state and civil society in Bangladesh are interacting structures composed of varied interests. The state is grounded in society and necessarily reflects society's class relationships which constitute a terrain of struggle, exploitation and resistance. Such resistance in civil society may not necessarily involve collective class action; it can be individualized or indirect or encompass other social categories such as gender or ethnicity or other social issues, such as the environment. The study demonstrated that a new breed of actors in civil society are gradually emerging in Bangladesh, interested not in state power, but rather in creating a free space that is not dominated by the state. The wide variety of responses in civil society to the multifaceted crises in their lives and their collective efforts to bring about structural transformation provide a critique of dominant development framework and

represent a form of countervailing power which has the potential to formulate an alternative to the prevailing development framework.

The state and civil society in Bangladesh have been viewed from different theoretical perspectives. Neo-Marxist theories highlight the role of the state in promoting differentiation, polarization and class conflict in society. The rural elites are viewed as collaborators with the state in dominating the traditional social, political and religious institutions in the rural areas through the "rural" power structure. This class of rich peasants monopolizes the development resources which are channeled for rural areas. Thus, the pattern of access to rural development inputs are skewed in favor of the richer class. For these scholars, there exist structural sources of inequality in civil society. Thus, contradiction is not limited to the relationship between the state and civil society, but also exists within civil society. These neo-Marxist scholars argue that economic differentiation and polarization intensifies class struggle in civil society. However, in their analysis, not much is said about gender or the environment and the important interconnections of class, gender and environmental concerns.

Scholars drawing on liberal approaches, although recognizing the polarization and differentiation in rural society in Bangladesh, argue instead that patron-client

relationships which extend throughout the fabric of Bangladesh society hinder the crystallization of politics along class lines. They argue that in spite of increasing pauperization and landlessness there are few signs of class struggles in society. For this group of scholars, civil society is a harmonious sphere where popular interests are represented through civil society organizations like NGOs. They focus on reform of existing government policies, but do not address the need for structural transformation. Also, like the neo-Marxist approach, these scholars ignore both gender and the environment.

Drawing on the neo-Marxist approach, I argue that state and civil society are interdependent structures. The state reflects the structural and ideological power of dominant groups in society, bent on maximizing their supremacy and suppressing non-state actors. However, civil society is not the exclusive space of subordinate classes. It is subject to encroachment by the ruling classes too. There exist exploitation, oppression and structural sources of inequality within civil society. While I agree with many elements of the neo Marxist analysis, I think it is inadequate to capture all of the dilemmas of development in Bangladesh today. I have also drawn on the insights offered by the post Marxist approach, which focus on non-class dimensions such as gender, environment and the transformatory potential of civil society

action, because, I think it highlights many important aspects in understanding the multifaceted crises the country faces.

What we appear to be facing today in Bangladesh, is a scenario, not only of high socio-economic inequality, but also of a growing degradation of nature and its adverse impact on people who depend most critically on nature, particularly women. The struggle for the control and possession of natural resources has become a major cause of social conflict. This has been further intensified by shrinking economic opportunities and increasing concentration and scarcity of resources. As seen from the case studies discussed in Chapters Four and Five, common property resources such as forests, fisheries and water resources are of particular importance to the poor majority in Bangladesh, as many of them have devised strategies for survival which depend on access to these resources.

The rural poor in general, and women in particular, depend to a substantial degree for sustenance on the country's common property resources. Women in poor rural households are burdened with a significant responsibility for family subsistence and are important, often the primary and in many female-headed households the sole, economic providers. Therefore, they must maintain a reciprocal link with nature due to their marginality and their extensive dependence on natural resources for survival. For these women, a link with

nature exists because of their social and economic roles, which over generations have required them to provide food, water, fuel, fodder and income from a common property resource base. The knowledge base and skill that they have built up give rise to special concerns they share on ecological issues. This consciousness is not something inherent that necessarily arises out of their being women or better environmental managers. This consciousness is rooted in their social roles and the gender division of labor which lead them to interact extensively with natural resources for survival.

However, their ability to fulfill this responsibility is significantly constrained by the limited and declining resources and means at their command -- a constraint that stems not merely from their class position but also from gender. Gender structures in society influence class structures and there is a specificity of women's oppression beyond and in addition to that stemming from class. So, the most obvious concern that emerges from the discussions in previous chapters is the overwhelming impact of environmental degradation on women, especially poor rural women who interact with it for survival, and their complete marginalization from all policies and programs that seek to manage the environment. Women have participated in hardly any aspect of environmental management in the decision making process, despite the central role they play in activities that interface with the

environment. In fact, the policies and programs adopted have often affected them adversely, either in relation to their workload or social status or both and have, in some cases, actually sharpened gender inequities.

This study has demonstrated that in any discussion of political economy, gender and environmental issues are equally fundamental to class issues. Environmental issues cannot be isolated from class issues or gender issues because environmental degradation has a class/ gender differential impact in the country and all of these spheres are interconnected. I have therefore argued that class, gender and environmental concerns should be approached in a holistic way when discussing state and civil society in Bangladesh.

Different theoretical approaches have viewed these concerns in different ways. The women and environment perspective drawing on neo-liberal conceptions, uncritically assumes that a linkage exists and finds the solution in simply adding gender and environmental concerns to development policies. This approach, adopted by the state in Bangladesh, is inadequate in addressing the inherent power relations in society and the need for structural transformation. The ecofeminist approach, although it questions the dominant model of development, relies on essentialism and biological determinism to focus on the inherent closeness of women and the environment. This approach is also inadequate for

explaining the links in the context of Bangladesh as it obscures the heterogeneity of women's experience across class and national boundaries. In contrast, some alternative development perspectives have argued that the linkage of gender, class and the environment are socially constructed. They have not only questioned the underlying assumptions of the dominant development model but have highlighted the need for restructuring of the prevailing development framework.

Drawing on these alternative perspectives, I argue that development theory and practice founded on neo-classical assumptions excludes gender, environment, class and the interlinkages among them from its understanding of development. The dominant development model gives little recognition to the need to nurture and restore human life and ecosystems. There is a need to shift from an understanding of development as an efficient way to convert natural and human resources into material wealth, to a perspective which deemphasizes efficiency and growth and respects the interrelationship between people, their communities and their life support systems. The actual needs of the masses require to be understood rather than assumed. The complexities of these issues cannot be addressed effectively within the confines of the existing development models and power structures. To address them would imply more radical changes in conceptualization and in society. In order to interconnect

the diverse issues of gender, class, environment, race, age and geographical boundaries, there is a need for more than just a reform of policy. There is a need for substantial rethinking and recasting of the development enterprise. An alternative theoretical framework, with its critique of the modern and its focus on localized, subjugated knowledge/power system is more likely to create the conditions to attend to the concrete circumstances of lives of the marginalized and vulnerable people.

It is clear from the discussion in Chapter Four that development projects that are not sensitive to environmental consequences and their gender and class differential impact, can have a number of negative consequences. It may take resources away from the poor who were probably using them more effectively and sustainably, and deny them the rights to common property resources. It may give power to the rich who may exploit the resources for their commercial interests unsustainably. The analysis of government programs and policies on social forestry, shrimp cultivation and water resource management reflects a tendency on the part of the government to transform common property into private property (e.g., forest to monoculture plantation, capture fisheries to culture fisheries, natural flood water to controlled watershed). It may be argued that this kind of transformation of common property into private property is a very profound

structural change in society, which is a kind of violation that is later justified in the name of development.

Such development policies of the government have favored the relatively privileged sections of the population and increased the burden of poverty for a significant section of the underprivileged. Common property resources are increasingly being mediated by powerful interest groups in the rural power structure, at times allied with local state representatives. Hence, we see that civil society in Bangladesh has a distinctive class character and the pattern of access to development input is skewed in favor of the better-off classes.

State policies have often been instrumental in enhancing differentiation and polarization in civil society in Bangladesh. Although, recently, many of these problems are increasingly being recognized by the government and development organizations in Bangladesh, along with a growing general awareness of environmental issues and the centrality of gender in the processes associated with environmental degradation, government efforts are often constrained by an inadequate attention to structural change and failure to incorporate popular participation in any meaningful way. It is difficult to find many examples of actual policies and programs for development which incorporate the results of this awareness and recognition. As seen from the discussions in

Chapter Four, government programs on population control and family planning concentrate on providing health and family planning infrastructure. They treat gender as a additive category to be added onto existing ones, with women as a special target group. These interventions do not address the structural constraints faced by women, for example, patriarchal relations and policies of gender discrimination, which are still pervasive in every strata of society in Bangladesh. Nor does it address the important interconnections of gender, class and environment in sustainable development, and how one has an impact on the other.

Government initiatives have been devised and implemented as technical and administrative exercises which rarely take into account class and gender differentiation in society. Most of the factors which contribute to gender inequities and class inequities in Bangladesh are structural and hence cannot be countered merely by making technical adjustments to existing policy. Also the experience of environmental degradation in Bangladesh is differentiated by gender and class. Gender inequality, class inequality and gender/class differential impact of environmental degradation need to become a more visible focus of political mobilization and lobbying in order to bring about more radical change in society.

The reasons for the inadequacy of state development initiatives in Bangladesh are so deeply embedded in the

structures of government and the programs of donor assistance that they have prevailed irrespective of the particular regime in power at a given time, and they are likely to constrain any future government irrespective of its ideological or political orientation. Given the lack of structural reforms in government programs and the control of the rural power structure by vested interest groups, government development programs are often not viable in the long run. These measures are short term measures preventing the poor from rising as a class to defend their own interests. The poor are extremely difficult to reach through budget supported governmental programs. They do not often represent a cohesive and homogenous interest group and are weakly organized. Benefits intended for them tend to get appropriated by the middlemen and powerful sections of the population. The organization and management style needed for successful implementation of programs for the poor is missing in the traditional bureaucratic apparatus.

The programs and projects concerned with environmental conservation and sustainable development will only succeed on any scale when they address the social factors influencing the way people interact with the environment. These factors include access to common property resources, gender relations, class relations and people's participation. The need to bring women into the mainstream of ecological processes arises not

merely because of their extensive involvement with the environment, but in order to enable them to have access to and control over the resources with which they work so closely. Women's non-involvement in decision making process of government programs has often resulted in the failure of the programs to fulfil their original purpose. There is a need to raise the awareness of the importance of taking gender into consideration in all environmental policy. Gender and environmental issues are so much intertwined and interlinked in rural Bangladesh, that programs which strive to address women's oppression cannot ignore the environment on which they depend for subsistence. Isolating one issue from the other is not possible. This linkage of issues necessitates a holistic approach instead of a sectoral one. However, very little conscious effort has been taken to bring out the importance of these links and articulate its value in program design and implementation of government development projects.

Civil society in Bangladesh has responded to such inadequacies in state policies and contradictions in society. People marginalized by the development process are carving out their own paths in solving their problems. They are no longer ready to accept repressive state structures and the development paradigm that excludes them and increases inequality in society. They are responding to ecological, gender or class conflicts in society. Oppressed civil society

actors are increasingly organizing themselves in horizontal class based alliances to fight such oppression. There is a growth of consciousness not only along class lines but among other social categories and issue areas. Women's groups, environmental groups, peasant groups, landless groups and other social groups have become conscious of the need to organize and unite for fighting against oppression and subordination. Some development NGOs are also playing a catalytic role in conscientizing and mobilizing these people to assert their right to participate in development as subjects. The specific programs of Nijera Kori, UBINIG and Proshika discussed in Chapter Five illustrate this role. NGOs support for the grassroots helps organize them to fight against oppressive state policies and structures. While the voices of these resistance are yet too scattered to impact beyond the immediate local context, these may be viewed as containing radical potential to challenge diverse forms of power and domination which permeates civil society.

This new breed of actors in civil society is not interested in state power but rather seeks to recapture from the state a space within civil society in which there can be meaningful participation and thus personal and community empowerment. The people's response and experiments, even if they may not always achieve the proportions of a movement, have a varied mix of activities, ideologies, operational

methodologies and scales. The one thing they have in common is their attempt to empower the poor and vulnerable in one way or another. Some start with protests against the system, others start with small development activities. The objective is empowerment at the grassroots which constitutes an important step to restructure power structures in society and to redefine development goals. While such responses may not necessarily be expressed in class terms or involve collective class action, they constitute a common consciousness and a sense of collectivized grievances and interests. They are often individualized and indirect or encompass other social categories such as ethnicity, gender or other social issues, such as the environment. These new forms of consciousness and new alliances are catalytic in establishing a trend towards breaking up patriarchal and clientelistic relations in many areas which dominate civil society in Bangladesh.

Such responses to the multifaceted crisis represent a form of countervailing power and provide a critique of the dominant development framework which has brought major interventions into the lives of people in the name of development. They provide a number of lessons for rethinking past approaches to development. They articulate the critical need for an alternative to the system as it now works, an alternative in which the connections between gender, class and the environment have a central role. These responses have the

potential to lead to structural and social change and can help to widen the space for an alternative. They are a part of an on-going social process for structural change and clearly illustrate that the process of fundamental rethinking and restructuring of the dominant development model has begun. Although these movements represent varying degrees of mobilization, conscientization and organization for development, the perspectives and insights offered by such movements need to be an integral part of any attempt to chart out an alternative. These social movements in civil society are playing an important role in dismantling existing power structures in society and bringing about transformations in the thinking and processes and creating a space in which interconnections of gender, class and environmental concerns are taken into consideration.

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APPENDIX A**LIST OF INTERVIEWEES****Government Officials/Donors**

Fazlul Huq, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of Bangladesh.

Sultan Mahmud, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of Bangladesh.

Karar, Mahmudul Hasan, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of Bangladesh.

S.M. Afazuddin, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Irrigation and Water Resources, Government of Bangladesh.

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Ron Schtez, Bangladesh Flood Action Plan (FAP) Coordinator, CIDA, Hull, Canada.

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Dr. Nilufar Ahmad, Research Director, Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP), Center for Research and Action on Environment and Development, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Farhad Mazhar, Managing Director, UBINIG (Policy Research for Development Alternatives), Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Natasha Ahmed, Research Officer, UBINIG, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Farida Akhter, Deputy Director, UBINIG, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Iqbal Alam Khan, Research Officer, Proshika, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Rasheda Begum, Deputy Director, Nijera Kori, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Hasina Akhter, Project Director, Nijera Kori, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Martanda Pratap Barua, Administrator, Nijera Kori, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

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Abdur Rahim, Kaliakoir Upazilla, Gazipur, Bangladesh.

Kalimuddin, Kaliakoir Upazilla, Gazipur, Bangladesh.

Saleha Banu, Kaliakoir Upazilla, Gazipur, Bangladesh.

Majeda Khatun, Kaliakoir upazilla, Gazipur, Bangladesh.

Sayeeda Begum, Patrail Union, Delduar Upazilla, Tangail, Bangladesh.

Maleka Banu, Patrail Union, Delduar Upazilla, Tangail, Bangladesh.