

Link model on rural development in Bangladesh - Case study: VC formation at T village, Kalihati, Tangail

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Abstract: The “Link Model” had been developed and evolved in the earlier two Joint Study Projects of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) executed in Bangladesh. One of the major objectives of “Link Model” is to bridge the gap between villagers and agents of rural development, such as local administration and NGOs in rural areas. Coordination meeting among the stakeholders and micro infrastructure development are main components of the model. On the basis of the “Link Model”, a pilot project named Participatory Rural Development Project (PRDP) was drawn up and implemented from 2000 to 2004. The Project aimed to raise community and public consciousness among the stakeholders by means of coordination meetings and rural micro infrastructure build-ups through local resource mobilization. Village Committee (VC) proposed as a key institution of community development by the Link Model VC was an autonomous body of entire villagers and its activities were planned within a range of the capabilities of the villagers and more transparent and accountable to the public. VC encouraged spontaneous local initiatives in a democratic way with less disturbing the local social condition. In this paper VC was focused and reviewed, and then the findings clearly illustrated effectiveness and possibilities of VC. However, this positive success of VC fully depended on the linkage and network system among stakeholders at union level.

Key words: Link model, village committee, local initiatives, coordination meeting, micro infra development, community, experience.

Introduction

Link Model:

The “Link Model” had been developed and evolved in the earlier two Joint Study Projects of JICA (Presently Japan International Cooperation Agency), namely the Joint Study on Agriculture and Rural Development (JSARD) implemented from 1986 to 1990 and the Joint Study on Rural Development Experiment (JSRDE) implemented from 1992 to 1995 (Fig. 1).

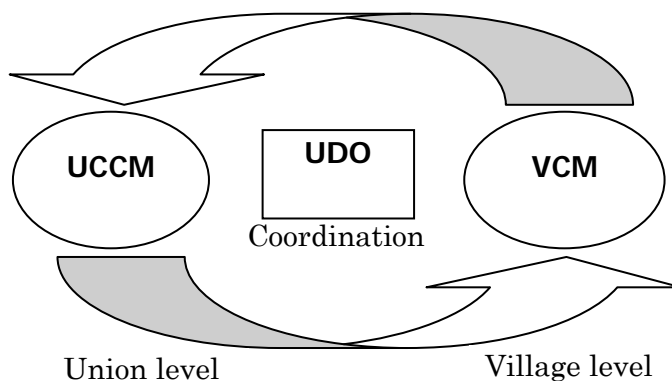


Fig. 1. Concept of the Link Model

(Source: Report of the final seminar of PRDP)

On the basis of finding of the “Link Model” (hereinafter the Model), a pilot project named Participatory Rural Development Project (PRDP, hereinafter the Project) was drawn up and had been implemented by Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) and JICA from 2000 to 2004. The PRDP approach or Link Model Approach is planned to be extended at the country wise through the Union Development Coordination Committee (UDCC) and Town Level Coordination Committee (TLCC) in 2013. In this extension program of Link Model, the Village Committee is not fully set most probably due to difficulty of continuous grass-root support for the formation and management of village committee. However, the authors believe the VC will be required to function the Link Model properly in future. Therefore, this paper is aimed to archive the process of Village Committee and its activities

at T village implemented from 2000 to 2004 so that the scholars and practitioners can trace the Village Committee set in the link model.

The Link Model project initiated aiming to raise community and public consciousness among the stakeholders such as villagers and development agents, and had implemented community-initiated rural micro infrastructure build-ups with local resource mobilization and institution buildings. One of the major objectives of the model is to bridge the gap between villagers and agents of rural development, such as local administration and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Union Coordination Committee (UCC) and Village Committee (VC) formed at union level and at village level respectively and Union Development Officer (UDO) posted at the union level were three major setups and coordination meeting was an important component of the model. UCC was composed of VC representatives, Union Parishad (UP; Parishad means council in Bengali) chairman and members, field staffs of Upazila offices (regional offices of Ministries and agencies), Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) staff and local elites. The UDO was a key figure for promoting and ensuring coordination among the stakeholders of the Model. UCC was constituted by the gazette notification of the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) and UCC Meeting (UCCM) was regularly held every month and acted as a rural development forum of the union.

Role of VC:

VC is an informal autonomous body formed on the consensus of the villagers and represents all strata of population in the village. Keeping in close contact with the service providers and the development agents, VC plays an important role in overall village development and a receiver of subsequent distribution of services at grassroots level.

Also VC implements development works and encourages villagers to participate development activities both physically and financially.

VC had a pivotal role between UCCM and villagers. Representative of VC attended the UCCM and presented the needs and problems of the villagers. Versus, the

solution and decision of the UCCM was conveyed and delivered to the villagers by them with assistance by the UDO. This system might promote comprehensive development of the villages.

Before initiation of activities, the Project held several orientation meetings at the *Upazila* and the union level. Then to ascertain the conditions of the village the UDO and the Project conduct household survey and prepared lists of the households. This preparatory work was a good opportunity both for the villagers to understand more and for the UDO to establish good relation with the villagers.

Guideline and process of VC formation

Formation of VC followed the guideline of the Project. Those are summarized as follows; VC should be formed by common consent of the village general meeting in which more than sixty percent (60%) of the total households concerned must be present. Members of the VC must be nominated and approved in the process of open discussion. The steering committee of the VC, namely a chairman, vice-chairmen, a secretary and assistant secretaries was selected among the members with the consent. VC must be consist of 15 to 30 members that cover every *Para* (hamlet) and kin in the village. At least one woman member must be selected from each *Para*.

VC formation is normally a laborious and tough work not only for the *matabars* (village leaders) but also for the UDO. Until reaching the mutual consent among following procedures were followed over and over again.

1. First, some interested villagers most of them are active leaders or youths, contact the UDO concerned. The UDO explains the formalities, guidelines and other information about VC formation to them.

2. Then they informally inform the matter and consult important *matabars* in the village. *Matabars* discuss each other and select some person responsible to inform and motivate villagers to attend the meeting; most of them are popular leaders. Reached the consensus of the village leaders, the application of VC formation and proposed date of meeting is submitted to the UDO.

3. The UDO and the project staffs attend the meetings held both in the *Para* and in the village, and verify whether the meeting is valid or fail in line with the guideline of VC formation. When the meeting is declared valid and common consent is made, villagers can form the VC. They nominate VC members and the steering committee of the VC is decided. The UDO and the project staffs regularly advice and assist the leaders.

Expected activities of VC

VC must call 2 types of meeting; one is monthly VC meeting (VCM) attended by all the VC members and another is a general meeting at which representatives of every household to be present and held whenever necessary. Problems, needs and proposals of development plan is discussed and decided in the meeting, and presented at the UCCM by representatives of the VC. In the same way, decisions and topics of the UCCM are reported at the VCM and delivered to all the households by the VC member concerned or by the notice board. Also VC implement small scale development work called VC scheme that must be planned and implemented on the consensus of the entire villagers.

Materials and methods

This paper is the revised version of the presentation by Yajima at the final seminar on Participatory Rural Development Project: Development Human Capacity under Link Model, January 25-26, 2004, Dhaka Bangladesh (Yajima, 2004) with referring the other documents given in the reference. The data used in this paper were directly corrected by the project staff at the T village, Kalihati, Tangail.

Results and Discussions

Case study:VC formation at T village, Kalihati,Tangail

1. Background: Profile of the village Kalihati are shown in Table 1. The village is located about 10 km north of the busy bazar (market) and *Jamuna* (a river in Bangladesh) Bridge Approach Road in Kalihati *Upazila*, Tangail district. A major road passes by the west of the village. There was an earthen road in the village which was constructed in the Pakistan period. Proper maintenance has never been done since then, and the road was not good enough to ply rickshaw or van. During the rainy season villagers used a raft to reach main road and had great difficulty in getting to near-by bazars. Therefore, the villagers had eagerly requested the Union *Parishad* (UP) for maintenance of the road through UP member concerned for a long time. But the villagers' need failed to be realized so far.

Table 1. Village Profile (December 2003)

Total Population	: 593
Male	: 268
Female	: 271
No. of households	: 106 (102 households in 2000)
Date of VC formation	: 01 November, 2000
VC members	: 17 (male: 13, female: 4)

Source : Report of the final seminar of PRDP

2. VC formation

VC in the village was formed in the following procedure.

July 27, 2000: Orientation workshop by the Project was held at the UP office concerned. UP chairman, UP members and field staffs of Upazila offices working in the union presented at the workshop. Objectives and proposed activities were explained and the participants were requested to cooperate with the project.

October 3, 2000: Before starting household survey, the project sent a staff to convince the *matabars* and villagers and explain purpose of the survey and the project.

October 4 & 5, 2000: Household survey was held. The project staff visited and interviewed every household, and discussed with the villagers. First, Mr. M (HH 10) who had frequently been contacted by the Project voluntarily helped to convince the *matabars* and villagers about the Project and the use of household survey. Later these people started delivering information to the villagers voluntarily. At the same

time, a UP member concerned assisted the Project to urge the villagers.

October 10, 2000: On behalf of the village two matabars and the UP member concerned visited the Project office and inquired about VC formation. Objectives, expected activities and the condition of VC formation were explained. They conveyed the result of discussion and information to the villagers.

October 12, 2000: Mr. A, one of the matabars came to inform that a village general meeting would be held in one house on the 14th October 2000. He asked the UDO to attend and assist the meeting on that day.

October 14, 2000: the UDO and the Project staff attended the meeting and explained the VC formation guidelines. The UP member concerned also attended the meeting

and advised the villagers to submit a written application for VC formation to the UDO.

October 23, 2000: an orientation workshop was held at the UP office with present of the UP chairman, members, field staffs of Upazila offices and NGOs and local elites/ leaders. Representative of the village handed an application letter of the VC formation. VC formation meeting was decided to be on the 1st November 2000. In the village, several villagers were nominated and given responsibility on delivering information and encouraging villagers to attend the meeting.

November 1, 2000: The UDO and the staff attended the village meeting. The villagers selected 17 VC members, and a chairman, a Vice-chairman, a secretary and an assistant secretary were nominated.

Leadership and VC activities are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Leadership and VC activities in the village (by March 2001)

Chakla	Chakla ⁽¹⁾		PRDP news informers	General Meeting organized	VC member original	UP Tax collection	VC Member revised	Women group member HH
	Total HH Nos.	Leader HH						
I	14	13	10, 13 , 1	10	2, 10(w), 13	10/ 13 ⁽²⁾	7(w), 10(w), 13	7,10
II	11	24	24	24	24(C)	24	24(C)	24
III	9	16		16	16	16	16 , 16	
IV	9	31		31	31		31, 36(w)	35,36
V	16	38	37, 47	37, 47, 50	37(AS), 47, 51	37	37(AS), 38, 47, 51	39,52
VI	10	55	59	65	59(w), 65(VC), 66	56	59(w), 65(VC) ⁽⁴⁾ , 66	59,65
VII	14	76			73, 83			
VIII	6	84				65 ⁽³⁾		92
IX	3	87	87	87	87			
X	10	97	97	97	97	97	97	68,101
Total	102	10	9	10	17	7	17	12

Note: is a village leader. **Bold** is *samaj* (local society) leader. (C) Chairman, (VC) Vice Chairman, (S) Secretary, (AS) Assistant Secretary, (W) Women, *Chakla* is a household group of neighbors, HH 10 left for Middle-east, HH 13 took over the responsibility, HH 65 who belongs to *Chakla* 6 is responsible to overlook *Chakla* 7 & 8, VC information to *Chakla* 7, 8 & 9 is delivered by HH 65, Source: Report of the final seminar of PRDP.

(3) Development work implemented by VC

(a) **Para road construction:** After VC was approved and authorized, first VCM was called and the common issues in the village were discussed on December 8, 2000. Then the VC decided to apply a scheme on *Para* road construction to the Project.

Another VC meeting was held on January 17, 2001. VC decided to clear the conditions and submitted the resolution of the meeting to the Project. The conditions were clearance of UP tax and 20% matching contribution (voluntary earth work) by the villagers (Table 3).

The road construction was implemented as follows;

January 29, 2001: The UDO and the Project staff visited the village to measure the proposed road.

February 1, 2001: The VC employed a surveyor to plan a road design and to estimate construction cost.

February 9, 2001: UCCM was held to discuss and approve the scheme proposed by the VC.

February 20, 2001: UP tax collection was completed in the village. VCM was held at 8 pm on the same day. The date of inauguration of the work was decided.

March 2, 2001: Construction work was inaugurated.

March 4, 2001: Villagers started Voluntary earthwork.

March 10, 2001: Voluntary earthwork (20% of the total construction cost) was completed.

March 13, 2001: Following the completion of 20% matching contribution by the VC, rest of construction cost was released by the Project. Work was started again.

April 10, 2001: Road construction work was completed.

During the construction work, the VC and the villagers regularly supervised the work on the site. Table below shows detail of the scheme.

UP tax collection

Mr. A, one of VC member obtained the list of outstanding UP tax from the UP tax collector and calculated the tax both of current and of due of every household. Then, 7 *matabars* were given the responsibility of tax collecting. They discussed progress of tax collection several times in

the evening. After completion of tax collection, receipt of UP tax issued by the UP finally handed over to the

respective household by the leader of a household group of neighbors.

Table 3. VC scheme (Para Road) figure of T village

Road design (feet)				Budget (Taka)		
Length	Width	Height	Earth work volume	Total	Voluntary contribution	Grant-in-aid
2210'	8'	3'-16"	77,340 cft.	38,721	7,785	30,936

How to realize voluntary earthwork

The villagers contributed 20% of the total cost for the VC scheme implementation. For this purpose several meeting was held and how to realize contribution was discussed. Some household considered as destitute/ poor family were exempted from owing contribution according to proposal of the leader of a household group of neighbors. Then the amount of contribution was decided. The villagers can pay their shares in the form of voluntary labor or cash.

In the village, 49 households participated in voluntary earthworks and 39 households paid an equivalent amount of cash of earthworks (Table 4). The leader of each household group of neighbors was responsible to collect cash contribution in the group concerned. When some household did not pay its contribution, the VC chairman collected the due by going door-to-door.

Table 4. VC scheme UP Tax and Contribution of T village (March 2001)

Number	Chakla		VC Scheme					Sanitary Latrines constructed (Nos.)
	Total HH Nos.	Leader HH	Tax Collector (HH)	State of Contribution by VC (Nos.)				
				cash	labor	exempted	Out of village	
I	14	13	13	4	6	3	1	11
II	11	24	24	4	2	2	1	6
III	9	16	16	1	8	0	0	10 ⁽²⁾
IV	9	31	37	1	7	1	0	7
V	16	38	56	3	11	2	0	14
VI	10	55	65 ⁽¹⁾	6	3	0	1	8
VII	14	76		11	1	2	0	13
VIII	6	84		2	3	1	0	6
IX	3	87	97	1	2	0	0	1
X	10	97		3	6	1	0	7
Total	102	10	7	37	49	13	3	83/(88) ⁽³⁾

Note:HH 65 who belongs to Chakla 6 is responsible to overlook Chakla 7 & 8, Few household constructed more than 2 latrines, Total 88 latrines were constructed in 2003, but households of 5 latrines cannot be identified by the author, Source: report of the final seminar of PRDP

(b) Sanitary latrine construction

Some village women raised the issues and needs on improvement of health, sanitation and environmental situation. UP released an amount of Tk 5000 for this program. The beneficiaries contributed 30% of total construction cost and rest was born by the UP. They started to make sanitary latrine in the households where hygienic latrine was not installed. In these way 100% households in the village covered by hygienic latrine, and that contributed improvement of overall health, sanitation and environmental situation.

(4) Information Delivery of VC

The VC has developed information delivery system in the village, and information of UCCM and VCM was delivered to the villagers by the VC members concerned. The VC chairman regularly attended the UCCM and he brought the result and information of UCCM to the VCM. Then VC members delivered that information to the villagers. They also use the notice boards to circulate the

messages in the village. Also, the women's group who initiated the sanitary scheme has great roles of information delivery in the village.

Findings: After "learning by doing" and many "trials and errors" by the VCs, some interesting and noteworthy findings concerning on VC were observed clearly. Those were as follows; practice of VC formation may develop community spirit and local initiative among the villagers. VC was an autonomous village body formed by villagers and its activities were decided on public consensus and the democratic way. Considering diversified local conditions of the village, alternative information delivery systems were developed to meet the needs of the villagers. This ensured openness of information and promotes information sharing on service deliveries of the government.

The UDO, the Project staff and UP member concerned was a key informant of VC formation and got in touch with and motivated the *matabars* and villagers at the early stage of the Project. After the UCCM established,

particular field staffs of *Upazila* offices concerned turned an active promoter of the VC formation and eagerly urge and motivate the villagers.

The pioneer VCs were formed where development minded leaders were available and less opportunity of allocation of development scheme from the UP. The Pioneer VCs performed normally better and became a core and model VC of Link Model copied by neighboring villages.

Implementing the VC schemes, villagers willingly contributed 20% of the total scheme cost as matching contribution (Table 5). VC also realized both current and outstanding UP tax in the village to meet the guideline of

VC scheme. After VC visit programs were introduced, interaction between NBDs and the villagers increased drastically and performance and standard of service delivery were improved too. Capacities to find problems and plan and implement development schemes were developed, and then bottom-up and participatory approach were effectively practiced by the villagers. VC members became active and showed confidence on participating development process. However, it may be mentioned that VC depends on the local condition as well as the quality of leadership in the village.

Table 5. VC scheme of the Project (December 2003)

No. of Scheme	Cost (Tk.)			UP Tax		
	total	VC	Grant-in-aid ⁽¹⁾	Due	Current	total
30 ⁽²⁾	1,471,372	201,273	1,270,099	19,620	79,671	104,352 ⁽³⁾

Note: 2 schemes out of 30 schemes funded by ADP (Tk.25000), a NGO (Tk.3500) and UP chairman (Tk.4000), those items are: road maintenance (23), school (4), culvert (1), Canal excavation (1), Sanitation (1), Tk. 5061 is not clearly divided in to due and current, Source: report of the final seminar of PRDP

Conclusion

Findings clearly indicate that the villagers cleared the outstanding of the UP tax and voluntarily paid 20% matching fund of total cost of the scheme, because the community/ village initiatives was respected and encouraged by the Project. The experiences of participation of development processes accumulated both in individual and in the community. The information delivery network enabled villagers to acquire development information and to access the necessary resources.

To ensure villagers' initiatives, overall responsibility on VC development scheme must be given to the VC. It may require more tolerant work, UDO responds only to those who come to contact. Local social condition, initiative and capabilities of community should seriously be taken into consideration rather avoid outsider's intervention and imposition.

Positive signs of VC as an autonomous body gradually emerged so far. VC and VCM may be a platform for development in the village. To keep the VC active and running, linkage and network at the union level is essential and should be continued. Finally, the experience worked in the development process through the Link Model surely grew community consciousness to fulfill the common interest in the village.

Acknowledgement: This study was a review of PRDP executed by BRDB and JICA in which the authors worked as experts. We would like to thank BRDB and JICA providing opportunity and the people concerned to PRDP who worked together. Almost ten years passed since PRDP expired, UCCM (presently UDCM) has been accepted and gradually extended in rural Bangladesh by the GoB. However, the authors consider concept of VC must be carefully focused again. We are grateful to the

journal of Agroforestry and Environment providing opportunity to review VC activities.

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