# ROLE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL IN GOOD GOVERNANCE
## THE CASE OF PRDP IN BANGLADESH

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*P*URPOSE
*THE study was undertaken with the objective of identifying the institutional mechanisms for promoting transparency, accountability, and villagers' participation in Gram Committee (GC) activities under Participatory Rural Development Project (PRDP) link model that emanated from creation of social capital in rural society; and to test a research question i.e., does formation of social capital contribute to better implementation of GC activities under PRDP link model?*

***Design/Methodology/Approach:** The study was primarily based on qualitative analysis. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected from Chairman, Vice-Chairman, secretary, male and female members of GCs, NBDs extension agents, UP representatives and secretaries, general villagers and project officials. Secondary data were collected by applying content analysis method through looking into project documents, brochures, research reports, GC and UCC resolution, GC guidelines, scheme preparation and approval documents, scheme application form, declaration from for giving soil and land by the land owners for GC scheme, attendance register of GC and relevant books were consulted.*

***Findings:** The study revealed that the prolonged intervention of PRDP link model helped formation of social capital in the study area through imbuement and better internalization of a sense of cooperation; togetherness; mutual trust, communication and network; solidarity, developing relationship and interactions among the community activities performed by the GC, which was in fact the pivotal institution of PRDP for ushering development and transformation at the grassroots.*

***Research Implications:** It appeared that formation of social capital contributed to GC becoming a relatively effective and socially viable institution for local development that demanded better governance in GC, which ultimately facilitated better implementation of PRDP model in the project villages. It was found that the institutional mechanisms of promoting transparency, accountability to the villagers, and community participation in GC are embedded in the process of formation of GC.*

***Practical Implications:** During its long time implementation, GC has found a sustainable process of local development through donor's support. But in Bangladesh, it has become a common phenomenon that such donor supported best practices end with the withdrawal of donor support and termination of implementation phase. Although, overtime GC developed social capital in the project villages but withdrawal support from the donor may inhibit its self-sustaining strength due to lack of matching grant system and its other unique mechanism of PRDP model. Most of the time, experiences and*

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*lessons learnt from such donor's support based best practices cannot be properly utilized due to lack of strong advocacy and adopting appropriate means for mainstreaming it nation-wide as such project experiments suffer from the basic problem of sustainability.*

***Originality/value:*** *General review.*

***Key Words:*** *Social Capital, Governance, Participatory Rural Development, Nation Building Departments, Gram Committee, Union Development Officer.*

## Background of the Study

It is one of the mandated duties of the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) to test contemporary theories and approaches of development in order to develop suitable models for rural development (RD) and thus to suggest policy guidelines to the government. From its inception in 1959 till date, BARD has experimented and also developed quite considerable number of RD models. In its wake it developed an RD model entitled Participatory Rural Development Project (PRDP) through research and action research during the time frame of 1986-1995 in cooperation with a number of academic institutions under the auspices of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). After that, the implementation responsibility of PRDP- popularly known as PRDP link model - was assigned to Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB), which completed its first phase in 2000-2004 and began the second phase commencing from 2005.

PRDP link model, through its two phases, developed unique institutional arrangements of a two-tier committee system. Its institutional arrangement embodies formation of Gram Committee (GC) at the base or village level and Union Coordination Committee (UCC) at the Union level. As per the system of PRDP model, in every village one Gram Committee (GC) is formed comprising 15-20 members on consensus of all the household and representing people from all paras (sub-village) and gushties. A GC representative, chosen on consensus, needs to attend the UCC meeting (UCCM) to inform the decisions of the GC meeting (GCM) for getting required services from the UCC. Addressing the common interest of the villagers, both GC and UCC are empowered to undertake minor schemes up to 50,000 Tk. following a pre-determined system of cost sharing method. According to GC and UCC scheme guidelines (BRDB/JICA: 2008) of the PRDP model, GC can undertake development schemes relating to para road, small culverts, drain, hat/bazaar, bridge, school repair, arsenic free tube well, public library, sanitation etc., based on a matching grant system and fulfilling condition of clearing hundred percent UP tax in that village.

In a traditional society like Bangladesh through the long implementation period in two phases of the PRDP link model – GC helped formation of social capital in the rural society, which eased/facilitated promote some essential conditions of good governance in its entire working procedures. Formation of social capital evolved over a long time amidst social solidarity, interactions and network among diverse groups and people in the community; mutual trust, reciprocity and belongingness; collective actions, shared visions and sense of responsibility based on common interests and mutual benefits among the villagers. All these attributions of social capital resulted in establishment of some basic features of good governance like transparency, accountability and villagers' participation through some institutional mechanisms of GC activities in the community setting. But there is lack of empirical evidence on how such social capital contributes to GC governance. Therefore, the study present was undertaken with a view to identifying those institutional mechanisms for promoting transparency, accountability and villagers' participation in the gram committee system of PRDP link model.

### Objectives of the Study

In line with the stated research problem, the following research objective and research question are set to identify the institutional mechanisms for ensuring governance that emanated from social capital formation in rural society through Gram Committee of PRDP link model.

*Specific Objective*
The specific objective was to identify the institutional mechanisms for promoting transparency, accountability and villagers' participation in GC activities under PRDP link model that emanated from creation of social capital in rural society;

*Research Question*
Does formation of social capital contribute to better implementation of GC activities under PRDP link model?

**Scope of the Study**
The scope of the study was limited to some particular issues of governance in GC of PRDP link model. A few questions were asked to the GC members, UP representatives, NBDs and NGO field agents and the villagers to know the institutional mechanisms of promoting transparency, accountability and villagers' participation in GC activities of PRDP link model which resulted from formation of social capital in rural communities due to prolonged period of implementation of that project. To answer the research question attempts were made to analyze whether formation of social capital in rural society contribute to better implementation of GC activities under PRDP link model.

**Significance of the Study**
The study will be of great significance to the policy makers as building social capital in the village level organization (GC) and its consequence helps ensure a sustainable and cost effective development process at the grassroots. The long time implementation of PRDP model helped develop social capital formation through establishing a good network, relationship, communication, mutual trust, cooperation, and togetherness in the rural society/community people, which in turn calls for instilling some features of good governance in GC activities through its institutional mechanisms to promote transparency, accountability, and increased villagers' participation. Due to the creation of social capital at the grassroots with improved transparency, accountability, and increased level of community participation, GC was able to fulfill its mandated functions effectively, which in turn facilitated better implementation of the PRDP link model. The study will also help generate a policy directives and debates on the issue of social capital and its relevance for the rural society. The formation of social capital enables the community people especially the poor to exercise their innovative ideas, local wisdom, exert their voice to influence better and effective service provision using cooperation, support, trust, network, and interactions among the villagers themselves. It would also help improve planning and management of local development projects, preparation scheme and proper utilization of resources, etc., which in turn contribute immensely to better implementation of PRDP link model.

**Study Methods**
The study was primarily based on qualitative analysis. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected from Chairman, Vice-Chairman, secretary, male and female members of GCs, NBDs extension agents, UP representatives and secretaries, general villagers and project officials. Secondary data were collected by applying content analysis method through looking into project documents, brochures, research reports, GC and UCC resolution, GC guidelines, scheme preparation and approval documents, scheme application form, declaration form for giving soil and land by the land owners for GC scheme, attendance register of GC, and relevant books were consulted.

To gather primary data, two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) composed of 20-25 respondents and three in-depth case studies of 3 GCs were done. Two FGDs comprising of different types of respondents/stakeholders *i.e.,* GC members (including Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Male and Female members), NBDs extension agents, UP representatives and general villagers were done in *Narandia* and *Sahadevpur* UPs. In *Narandia* UP, representatives from *Mdhokpara*

*Nagarbari, Jadurpara, Prashna, Palima, and Char Nagarbari* GC were present. In *Sahadevpur* UP, representatives from *South Chamuria, Baniafair, Akuya, and Powjan* were present in the FGD. To have an in-depth understanding about social capital and its aftermath *i.e.,* ensuring good governance in GC through its institutional mechanism for promoting transparency, accountability, and villagers' participation in GC activities, three case studies - one in Jadurpara GC, one in *Modhokpara Nagrbari* GC, and the other in *Char Nagarbari* GC in *Narandia* UP were done.

In both FGDs and Case Studies, few questions containing a short checklist in congruence with the research objective and research question were followed. General villagers' perceptions/opinions were also tapped using informal discussion and SSI (Semi Structured Interview) regarding formation of social capital in rural society and institutional mechanism for enhancing transparency, accountability, and villagers' participation through GC activities. In addition to that, consultation with the project officials (DD, AD, Research Officers, etc.), and project personnel/staff/field workers were also done. Finally, researchers' personal observation, knowledge, and experience gained through institutional attachments were also used to enrich the findings obtained through FGDs, Case Studies, consultations with project personnel, and villagers.

### Limitations of the Study
The findings of the study were the outcome of a specifically designed purpose and hence these were not necessarily expected to be confirmed results of the researchers obtained in different contexts. The study was confined only to social capital formation and GC governance of the PRDP-2 link model and hence other aspects were not considered.

The study was mainly based on qualitative analysis and data were collected using FGD, interview, and case study method. Due to time and resource constraints, the GCs were chosen as per convenience of the researchers. The study would be more fruitful if qualitative analysis could be supported with some quantitative analysis. But the findings of the study would still help the policy makers to draw conclusion and suggest some policy options, which could be enormously useful for undertaking future rural development models in Bangladesh.

## Theoretical and Analytical Framework

### Theoretical
The concept of social capital occupies a remarkable place in the field of social science literature over the last few decades. Social capital refers to the resources such as trust and solidarity, social networks, information and communication, association, ideas, supports that individuals are able to obtain by virtue of their relationship and interactions with other people. These "resources" or "capital" are social, meaning that they are only accessible in and through these relationships, unlike physical (tool, technology) and human capital (education, knowledge and skill), which are essentially the properties of individuals (Grootaert el al., 2004). Scholars were in the opinions that building social capital in the society can help solve many critical problems. Formation of social capital takes place in a given society through interactions, relationship, network and cooperation among human beings. It does not grow overnight rather it grows over a long time through its social customs & traditions, norms & values, and culture & religions. The evolution of the concept, some definitions, types, and sources of social capital are explained.

### *The Evolution of the Concept of Social Capital*
The concept of social capital is not a new concept. The origins and the intellectual history of the concept can be traced back to thinkers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and has deep and diverse roots in philosophy, economics, sociology, anthropology, and political science literature (Grootaert & Van Bastelaer, 2002; Healy & Hampshire, 2002; Adam & Roncevic, 2003). Most authors dealing with social capital argues that L.J. Hanifan, a social reformer, first coined the term, "social capital" in 1916. The basic essence of social capital can be found in the writings of

many great scholars/philosophers such as Aristotle, Locke, Rousseau, Durkheim, Marx, Tocqueville, J.S. Mill, Toennies, Weber, Simmel, Adam Smith, Hofsteed and so on (Watson & Papamarcos, 2002; Bankston & Zhou, 2002; Brewer, 2003; Emmanuel & Phillipa, 2001; Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993; Putnam, 1995; Trigilia, 2001; Portes & Landolt, 1996; Winter, 2000a; Winter, 2000b; Heffron, 2000; Knack, 2002;). In modern time, the concept of social capital has received unprecedented acceptance and application to diverse areas after publication of the landmark book by Putnam et al., 1993.

### Definition of the Concept of Social Capital

According to Putnam (2000), "Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to the properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them". In that sense social capital is closely related to what some have called "civic virtue." Putnam underscores the importance of social capital in many ways. Firstly, "social capital allows citizens to resolve collective problems easily. People often might be better off if they cooperate with each other". Secondly, "social capital greases the wheels that allow communities to advance smoothly. Where people are trusting and trustworthy, and where they are subject to repeated interactions with fellow citizens, everyday business and social transactions are less costly". Thirdly, "social capital improves people's lot by widening their awareness many ways in which their fates are linked. When people lack connection to others, they are unable to test the veracity of their own views, whether in the give or take of casual conversation or in more formal deliberation. Without such an opportunity, people are more likely to be swayed by their worse impulses".

The World Bank (1999) has explained social capital in a very simple but significant manner. It says that "social capital refers to the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions. Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society – it is the glue that holds them together".

The available literature reveals that social capital is an admixture of a wide range of issues, which have a bearing on history and culture, social structures, family, education, environment, mobility, economics, social class, civil society, consumption, values, networks, associations, political society, institutions, policy, and social norms at various levels. Social capital does not have a clear, undisputed meaning, for substantive and ideological reasons (Dolfsma & Dannreuther, 2003; Foley & Edwards, 1997). For this reason there is no set and commonly agreed upon definition of social capital and the particular definition adopted by a study will depend on the discipline and level of investigation (Robison et al, 2002). Based on the various definitions, it can be summarized that the concept of social capital embodies a huge range of social resources such as bridging, bonding, linking diverse people getting together by virtue of mutual sense of trust, network, reciprocity, cooperation, relationship, friendship, interactions, solidarity, inclusion, empowerment, participation, information and communication, groups, and association. Social capital fosters a sense of togetherness among human beings in a given society towards solving myriad socio-economic problems, bringing change, transformation, and ensuring mutual benefits to each other.

### Types of Societal Capital

Michael Woolcock (2001), a social scientist from Harvard and the World Bank and Aldridge, Halpern et al., (2002) have made distinction among different types of social capital. According to them there are 3 types of social capital with different meanings and implications, which include bonding social capital, bridging social capital and linking social capital. Bonding social capital denotes ties between people in similar situations, such as immediate family, close friends, and neighbours (Woolcock, 2001). Bonding is horizontal, among equals within a community whereas bridging is vertical between communities (Dolfsma & Dannreuther 2003; Narayan, 2002; Narayan & Pritchett, 1999). Bonding social capital is localized and it is found among people who live in the same or adjacent communities (Wallis, 1998; & Wallis et al., 1998).

On the other hand, bridging social capital encompasses more distant ties of like persons, such as loose friendships and workmates (Woolcock, 2001). Bridging social capital refers to that social capital, which extends to individuals and organizations that are more remote and bridging social capital is closely related to thin trust, as opposed to the bonding (splitting) social capital of thick trust (Wallis, 1998; Wallis et al., 1998; Anheier & Kendall, 2002).

Linking social capital reaches out to unlike people in dissimilar situations, such as those who are entirely outside of the community, thus enabling members to leverage a far wider range of resources than are available in the community (Woolcock, 2001). Putnam did not really concern about linking social capital nor did he come to grips with the implications of different forms of social capital rather he opines that 'different combinations of the three types of social capital will produce different outcomes (Field, 2003). Bonding capital is good for under-girding specific reciprocity and mobilizing solidarity. Bridging networks, by contrast, are better for linkage to external assets and for information diffusion. Moreover, bridging social capital can generate broader identities and reciprocity, whereas bonding social capital bolsters our narrower selves. Bonding social capital constitutes one kind of sociological superglue, whereas bridging social capital provides a sociological (Putnam, 2000).

The other important distinction of social capital, developed by Norman Uphoff & Wijayaratna (2000), spans the range from structural manifestations of social capital to cognitive ones (Grootaert and Van Bastelaer, 2002). Structural social capital facilitates mutually beneficial collective action through established roles and social networks supplemented by rules, procedures, and precedents (Hitt et al., 2002). Cognitive social capital, which includes shared norms, values, attitudes, and beliefs, predisposes people towards mutually beneficial collective action (Krishna & Uphoff, 2002; Uphoff, 1999). Cognitive and structural forms of social capital are commonly connected and mutually reinforcing (Uphoff & Wijayaratna, 2000).

**Analytical Framework**
Through the long implementation period of PRDP link model aiming at grassroot level development, social capital formation occurred in the project villages, which in turn calls for ensuring good governance in the activities of GC. Here in this study "social capital" refers to relationship, fellow feelings, trust and solidarity, groups and network, collective action and cooperation, information and communication, social cohesion and inclusion, norms, values, and practices followed by the villagers, empowerment and participation of the villagers, which is developed through various institutional mechanisms in managing the entire development process/ activities of GC under PRDP link model. Using an analytical framework, how formation of social capital helps promote transparency, accountability, and villagers' participation and better implementation of PRDP model is explained. The main argument of this analytical framework is based on the premise that through the interventions of the PRDP model, some forms of social capital is formed at the community level. Such formation and accumulation of the social capital result in demand for and practice of transparency, accountability and participation at the community level. These features of good governance ultimately made the PRDP model relatively successful and effective in terms of its project indicators. The analytical framework can be well understood in the following Figure.
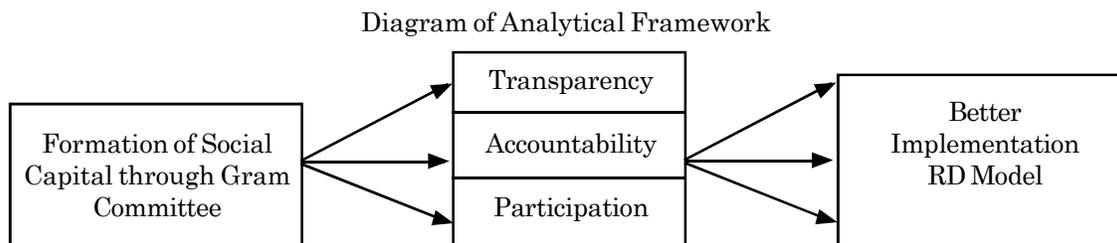
Diagram of Analytical Framework



**Figure 1**

## The Concept of the PRDP Link Model

PRDP is one of the interventions of the BRDB, that aims at developing a mechanism of coordination among Union Parishad (UP), Nation Building Departments (NBDs) and NGOs for ensuring effective service delivery by the NBDs and NGOs at the grassroots level. PRDP, popularly known as link model, has devised an institutional framework to address real needs and problems of development of the rural population following a vertical linkage among villages, Union and Upazila and horizontal linkage among villagers, extension agents or field workers of the government institutions, NGOs and other stakeholders concerning rural development at Union level. The objective of the PRDP link model is to bring a comprehensive rural development at Union and Village level through a participatory governance mechanism, ensure effective service delivery of NBDs-NGOs extension agents, building micro infrastructure towards improving socio-economic condition of the villagers using local resources and its proper utilization, develop human resources, strengthen UP by developing a mechanism of coordination of all development organizations, and promote accountability, and transparency among all stake holders in the Union.

### The Institutional Arrangement of the Link Model

PRDP link model is a unique institutional arrangement of PRDP, a two-tier committee system through which participatory bottom-up planning process has been practicing to incorporate the unheard voices, real choices and needs of the community people/villagers. At the base or village level there is Gram (Village) Committee (GC) and at the Union level there is Union Coordination Committee (UCC). In every village one Gram Committee (GC) is formed comprising 15-20 members on consensus of all the house hold and representing people from all paras (sub-village). A VC representative is chosen on consensus, who needs to attend the UCC meeting (UCCM) to inform the decisions of the GC meeting (GCM) for getting required services from the UCC. In the upper tier there is Union Coordination Committee (UCC) at the Union level headed by the UP Chairman comprising of all UP members, extension agents of all NBD functionaries as well as NGOs working at the Union level and representatives of the village committees including women groups. Both GC and UCC meet once a month regularly to discuss their various development agenda. NBD workers need to present their village visit schedules, work plans, and programs in the UCC meeting.

Addressing the common interest of the villagers, GC and UCC are empowered to undertake minor schemes up to 50,000 Tk. following a pre-determined system of cost sharing method. According to GC and UCC scheme guidelines (BRDB/JICA: 2008) of the PRDP model, GC can undertake development schemes relating to para road, small culverts, drain, hat/bazar, bridge, school repair, arsenic free tube well, public library, sanitation, etc., sharing 20% cost by the villagers, 10% cost by the UP, and 70% cost by the PRDP on condition that 100% UP tax are realized in that village. The GC schemes should have to be single village oriented. In case of UCC scheme 30% cost should be shared by UP and other stakeholders that include NBDs, NGOs, and GCs, and the rest 70% cost is to be borne by the PRDP. UCC can take schemes concerning educational/environmental event (such as organizing tree fair, book fair), cultural event (like pitha mela, observation of mother language day, victory day, and independence day), procurement (such as purchasing of sewing machine, arsenic test kit, pesticide spray machine, etc.) and flood rehabilitation (*i.e.,* bamboo bridge construction, seed distribution, earth filling work, etc.). For both GC and UCC schemes, notice boards should be installed in prominent locations of the villages to disseminate vital information to the villagers about the schemes and important decisions of the GCM and UCCM to ensure transparency and accountability of all concerned.

In PRDP a new position was created called Union Development Officer (UDO). UDO is deployed at the Union level and he needs to work as a catalyst keeping contact among all concerned for organizing villagers, coordinating development activities by establishing linkage between villagers and government and NGO extension workers, helping the villagers in preparing plan, implementation and monitoring of schemes. UDO also acts as a member secretary of the UCC. GCM is a unique

platform of villagers to discuss about their problems, and decide upon issues of common interest and implement whatever is decided with ownership and cost sharing. In the UCCM, GC representatives, UP members, NBD functionaries, NGO representatives of the locality exchange information and opinion freely and take necessary decisions.

**Formation Process and Activities of Gram Committee of PRDP Model**
A Gram Committee is formed at village level including the respected persons of the village with villagers consent. It is an informal forum formed in presence of the villagers taking the proposals from each para and clan (family) and supports from all. Needs are to be placed on priority basis identifying the problems of the village. In GC opportunities are created for the villagers to be organized together. Villagers get necessary advice from the govt. and non-govt. workers in the GCM. The main objectives are to adopt necessary measures for village development oriented discussions. GCM is primarily a media at village level, which assembles the villagers to be univocal and communicate the service providers. One representative from the GC will be the member of Union Coordination Committee Meeting (UCCM). The meeting is held in presence of at least one person from each household of the village. It is known as General Meeting. To form GC, general meeting should be arranged first. Meeting is held with the elected members of the GC. It is known as Gram Committee Meeting (GCM).

## Social Capital Formation and Features of GC Governance in PRDP Model
Through this study an attempt was taken to look into institutional mechanisms for promoting some essential features of GC governance under PRDP link model, which is basically the end product of social capital formation through the GC and other project interventions at the grassroots. The formation of social capital has created demand and urge for practicing governance in GC. This study tries to unravel the institutional mechanisms of GC governance in three core areas of governance such as transparency, accountability, and participation of the villagers in the GC. In order to ensure that several methods were adopted that included FGD with GC members, NBDs agents, UP functionaries, project officials and the general villagers, case studies on GC, consultations with the villagers and project official. In this section, briefly three case studies were elaborated to understand the issues of ensuring transparency, accountability and villagers' participation in GC activities in the PRDP link model.

### Transparency in GC
Social capital formation through GC calls for practicing of good governance and more transparency in GC activities. Transparency means openness in every activities of an organization or institution.

Transparency is a process and an end in itself that implies making relevant information available to all who are interested and whose interests are involved in any action or decision taken for them in order to enable them to make or to participate or to help that act. There are differences of meaning of transparency at national and local level. At local level transparency refers to the provision of relevant and reliable information to all the members involved (Manasan et al., 1999). In other words, transparency means making all information available to the members. In this study, transparency means "maintaining openness" and "sharing of GC activities and decisions with the villagers".

### Accountability in GC
Social capital formation in the rural society can buttress argument for promoting accountability in the GC affairs. Accountability entails an obligation to report its activities, role, and performance to an agreed authority or set of people. According to Manasan et al., (1999), accountability refers to "the ability of the villagers to exert pressure on the field workers to serve. In this study accountability refers to the answerability of the members of GC to the villagers for their actions, inactions, and decisions.

**Villagers' Participation in GC**

Formation of social capital through GC facilitated villagers' participation in different activities of GC. Participation is a very wide and complex concept. Participation refers to the close involvement of the people from all walks of life irrespective of sex, race, group, caste, colour, and religion in economic, social, cultural, and political decision-making process of an area (UNDP, 1993). According to the World Bank (2002), participation is the process through which stakeholders' influence and share control over priority setting, policy making, resource allocation and access to public goods and services. In this study, "participation" means the villagers' involvement in any of the activities undertaken by GC for the interest of the villagers.

# Major Findings

Formation of social capital developed through long duration of the project that helped instill a sense of mutual cooperation, trust and network, social cohesion, solidarity, communication and interactions among the villagers. Such formation of social capital through GC created space for practicing good governance in the realm of GC activities. In promoting GC governance, three core issues of good governance such as ensuring transparency, accountability and villagers' participation in GC activities were emphasized.

Transparency, accountability and participation are interrelated concepts, which are so intricately enmeshed together that cannot be isolated from each other. Some mechanisms of GC cover three issues simultaneously, whereas transparency and accountability are also intermingled together. On the basis of FGD, case study, SSI, and interview with general villagers, the following findings were derived regarding formation of social capital through ensuring mechanism of transparency, accountability, and enhancing community participation in the GC activities.

**Institutional Mechanisms of Promoting Transparency, Accountability and Villagers' Participation in GC**

The following institutional mechanisms of GC, helped promote transparency, accountability, and villagers' participation in GC activities, which in fact emanated from formation of social capital in the rural society through GC:

- **Formation of GC:** In the formative stage, attempts were made to ensure transparency in GC. Before formation of GC, Japan Overseas Cooperative Volunteers (JOCVs) along with other project personnel helped motivate the villagers through motivation, video presentation to form GC in a village. At that stage, a comprehensive base line survey was conducted to record the socio-economic status and number of total household. On the basis of that survey, attempts were made to organize some Para-based meeting and after a massive consultation with the inhabitants of all *Paras* and *Gushties* of that village, a general meeting was convened representing representatives of all house-hold/people from all *Paras* and *Gushties*. In this general meeting (GM), in the presence of at least 60% HH, GC Chairman, Vice-chairman, members were chosen on consensus. In this body one-third women's participation is maintained. After that, this entire body of GC is to be approved by the GM. The formation process of GC ensured transparency, accountability, and enhanced villagers' participation in GC activities.

- **Organizing GC meeting in every month:** All village based GC used to organize a monthly meeting at a suitable date. Some GC maintains a particular day/date of every month. It was agreed that all the GCs do that GCM on regular basis. Regular meeting helps ensure transparency, accountability, and participation of the villagers in GC activities.

- **Use of registered *khata*:** In order to record the attendance of the general villagers, GC members and other concerned, and also issues and decisions discussed and finalized, a registered *khata* is used in GC. Any villager has access to it. This mechanism helps in promoting transparency, accountability, and villagers' participation in GC activities.

- **Distribution of resolution to share important decisions of the GC:** Major important decisions of GC are shared with the common villagers and other stakeholders *i.e.,* UP, NBDs, UDO, UCC, through distribution of GC resolution. Such sharing of information with the villagers helps ensure responsible behavior, transparency, accountability, and villagers' participation in GC activities.

- **Provision of obtaining certificate from UP regarding tax clearance:** Following a decision taken by the GC meeting and getting approval from the UCC and PRDP-2 authority, GC needs to obtain a certificate of clearance of 100% tax from the UP before undertaking any scheme by GC. In doing so GC members require making approach to the villagers in order to convince the villagers to pay taxes fixed upon them. In collecting such taxes, UP needs to give a receipt/ voucher to the taxpayers, thus every taxpayer is aware of the schemes to be taken. This has significantly contributed to promoting transparency, accountability, and villagers' participation in GC affairs.

- **Cost sharing/Matching Grant System:** According to matching grant system, undertaking any project needs to be shared by the villagers, UP, and the PRDP. In implementation of any GC scheme, general villagers need to bear 20% cost from their own. As the villagers pay contribution for the GC scheme, so all GC members are very much concerned about the schemes performance. Matching grant system of GC helped enhancing transparency, accountability, and villagers' participation in GC activities.

- **Formation of Scheme Implementation Team (SIT):** For implementation of any development undertaking by the GC, a Scheme Implementation Team is formed comprising of 5-7 villagers representing different stakeholders such as GC Chairperson, one female GC member, UDO, GC secretary, concerned NBD members, teachers, and any relevant villager having UP membership as its adviser. The formation of SIT helps to maintain transparency, accountability, and enhancing the scope of participation of the villagers in GC scheme.

- **Introduction of notice board and display board:** In the PRDP-2 link model, GC is in the practice to use the notice board widely. Important decisions made in the GC resolutions, scheme related decisions, any important messages of the UP and NBDs, NBDs posters and scheme budget, procurement/expenditure statement of the scheme, etc., are generally affixed in the notice board, which needs to be set up at the important places of the villages. Through these notice boards, and display boards accountability and transparency are maintained in the GC to the villagers. Sharing relevant information through notice and display boards also encourage villagers' participation in GC affairs.

- **Organization of inauguration ceremony:** Overtime, it has become a general practice for the GC that at the start of the project and after successful completion of the GC scheme, each and every GC organizes an inaugural ceremony to inaugurate the scheme, where rural elites and general villagers are invited to participate in it. Thus GC ensured social accountability, transparency, and participation of the villagers.

- **Preparation of social map/measurement and cost estimation:** After formation of the SIT, it needs to prepare a social map/measurement and estimated budget of the proposed scheme. Being physically present at the project site, SIT prepares this measurement and budget in consultation with the villagers of that locality/para, which helps promoting transparency, accountability, and increased participation of villagers in GC affairs.

- **Organization of para meeting:** After getting preliminary approval from the UCCM, GC needs to organize a para meeting to share the information with the people of the scheme area. Through detailed discussion with the villagers, it is finally chosen and in this meeting commitment

of cost sharing amount by the villagers is recorded with their signatures. This also helps in ensuring transparency, accountability, and participation in GC activities. Organizing para meeting for scheme undertaking helps the villagers bonding together for mutual help, support, and common interest/purpose.

- **Organization of annual general meeting at the end of the year:** Every GC organises an annual general meeting (AGM) at the end of the year to review their last year's performance. This AGM performs a system of social audit in the GC, which helps ensure transparency, accountability, and participation in GC.

- **Scheme initiation, selection, preparation, and approval process:** In the whole process of scheme initiation, selection, preparation, and approval of a GC scheme, transparency and accountability is maintained in the PRDP-2 project. When a bottom-up, need based scheme is finally decided to be undertaken, a SIT is formed. The SIT needs to prepare the detailed cost estimation of that scheme after filed observation and consultation with the villagers of that area. Then SIT needs to finalize the total cost of the scheme and fix the cost shared by the general villagers, UP, and PRDP-2. Then it is sent to project office for final approval. Thus transparency and accountability is maintained in the entire process of scheme selection to finalization in GC.

- **Submission of completion report by the SIT:** After completion of the scheme, SIT needs to prepare a detailed completion report containing total expenditure statement, all original vouchers, and master roll payment along with other related documents as per need of the completion report format. Thus transparency and accountability in GC scheme is properly maintained.

- **Signing in a declaration form by the landowners for providing soil and land for construction of earthen road:** The landowners, who need to provide either soil or land for erecting earthen road, need to be prefixed in consultation with the landowners and villagers, which is being recorded and signed by the respective landowners in a format provided by the project authority. Here GC needs to sit and negotiate with the landowners several times as in some cases it is found that at the eleventh hour some landowners sometime fail to keep their previous commitment. This mechanism of GC helped develop transparency, accountability, and participation of the villagers.

- **GC maintains a cost effective mechanism of labor payment system:** Instead of daily payment system for the labour employed in earthen work in GC scheme, GC introduced a new system of labor payment, which is based on performance. Instead of daily payment system followed by KABIKHA, TR or KABITA in UP earthen work/project, GC measures the labourers' work by cubic feet, so that no labour can avoid work. In presence of general villagers, UDO, and SIT members measure the work and prepares the master roll, thus a participatory, transparent and cost effective project implementation is ensured in GC.

- **Areas of villagers' participation in GC:** It is learnt from the informal discussion with the villagers in the different studied GCs, general villagers have participation in paying taxes, sharing contribution of scheme, attendance in GC meeting, giving soil and land for construction of road. Villagers' increased participation is observed when important schemes are to be taken by the GC, especially concerned villagers of that para or gushti took part being previously informed about the meeting. The villagers also take part in local rally, local cultural activities, inauguration of any scheme, in annual general meeting.

**Lesson Learnt from this Study**
The lesson learnt from the study might be useful for the policy planners, which are presented in bullet from below:

- GC introduced a bottom-up participatory planning process at the grassroots.

- General villagers participation are higher in women dominated GC.
- GC established a horizontal and vertical accountability.
- GC introduced social accountability.
- GC introduced a social audit system.
- GC leaders are socially acceptable to the community people.
- GC follows an inclusive strategy.
- Villagers feel ownership of the GC.
- NDB service delivery improved.
- Income generating activities improved.
- Women development and empowerment through training organized by PRDP.
- Litigation in the village dwindled immediately.
- Villagers' tax payment tendency improved.
- Integrity of GC leaders is maintained because of the matching grant system.

## Conclusions and Recommendations
On the basis of the study findings, following recommendations and conclusions are made:

### Conclusions
Based on empirical evidence gained, it was apparent that formation of social capital contributed to GC becoming GC a relatively effective and socially viable institution for local development. It was found that the institutional mechanisms of promoting transparency, accountability to the villagers, and community participation in GC are embedded in the process of formation of GC and SIT. During its long time of implementation GC has found a sustainable process of local development through donor's support. But in Bangladesh, it has become a common phenomenon that such donor supported best practices end with the withdrawal of donor support and termination of implementation phase. Although, overtime GC developed social capital in the project villages but withdrawal of support by the donor may inhibit its self-sustaining strength due to lack of matching grant system. Most of the time experiences and lessons learnt from such donor's support based best practices cannot be properly utilized due to lack of strong advocacy and adopting appropriate means for mainstreaming it nation-wide as such project experiments suffer from the basic problem of sustainability. The institutional mechanisms of GC and the lessons learnt from the PRDP intervention can immensely be useful for strengthening the role of proposed "gram sava" system enunciated by the present government. GC mechanisms have enormous potential that can help undertake a pro-people and participatory development planning for grassroots development and its lessons can also be useful for other similar type of future intervention.

### Recommendations
**UP's role should be enhanced in GC:** UP's role in GC should be further expanded so that UP can extend all out support to GC activities, which in turn help develop a sense of ownership of the GC. Women UP members should be included in GC as members and involved in all activities of GC. UP as a legitimate local government institution at the grassroots, should not be bypassed, rather its role should be enhanced because GC in the long run may face problem to achieve sustainability and ownership. This is in line with the present government's enactment of the new UP Act in 2009, which has made provision to form ward shava in order to engage villagers in participatory planning and local development.

**Encourage forming separate women GC:** In our society, especially the condition of rural women folk is not satisfactory and they are still lagging behind in all aspects compared to men. In rural life, women have to suffer from malnutrition, unemployment, violence, and they lack in modern knowledge and technology. That's why women should be brought into the mainstream of development. Therefore, more intervention and some affirmative action should be provided to women. In a bid to overcome the problems, effort should be taken to form or to organize women in separate GC as it is evident that women have enormous potentiality to motivate and encourage others and thus to build relationship, interaction, solidarity, network, trust with flexible attitude, shared responsibility and engrained integrity and trustworthiness.

**Making provision of publishing an annual report by GC**: To record all the development undertaken and activities performed in the last year by the GCs, an annual report can be introduced. This report can be prepared covering the activities of 5-10 GCs altogether. This report may contain some basic socio-economic information of the villages, profiles of GCs, details of GC members and description of their development activities done in the last year. This report can help recording the achievement and failures of the GC, which can help create better social capital with improved transparency, accountability, and responsibility of the GC leadership.

**NGO's role should be enhanced in GC activities:** To increase the civil engagement and social capital formation in GC, NGO representatives should be involved in the Scheme Implementation Team. Provision should be made to involve NGO representative in the GC, which can help establish more transparency, accountability, and participation of the villagers.

**Limit of GC scheme allocation should be enhanced:** For initiating micro-infrastructure at the village level, the financial support provided from the PRDP/JICA is to some extent insufficient in the context of present day. Therefore, the ceiling of total cost should be increased.

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