

## **Building My Village into a Town: Thoughts and Reality**

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### ***Abstract***

*By expanding modern urban facilities to every village, promoting the implementation of SDGs in 2030, transforming into a developed country in 2041 and climbing the highest peak of prosperity in 2071, Bangladesh will become a golden Bengal. Bangladesh will move forward by following Delta Plan 2100 so that the development journey does not stop due to the impact of global climate change. In this development journey, the rural local government will serve as the basis for building a developed country to construct my village and my town. The role of local government, if adequately implemented, will create a conducive environment for GDP growth and continuously extend modern civic amenities to rural people. As part of the BARD applied research project, implementing "Aram Gram Aram Shahaor" in Barura Upazila No. 4 of South Khosbas Union of Cumilla District has spread the town's benefits to the village. The government plans to establish 10 model villages with all modern urban facilities in nine districts. The government has disbursed Tk 4993.90 crore already and plans to facilitate 5000 people living in these villages within June 2024. The government will also provide a loan of Tk 2 crore to the villagers under a minimal interest rate of only 3 percent. Model villages have the market infrastructure, modern health services, quality education, clean drinking water, information technology and high-speed internet facilities, improved sewage and waste management, community spaces and recreation, banking facilities, rural employment, increased power and energy supply, and agriculture. - It is said to have all facilities, including the increase in production through modernization and mechanization. Cumilla's Pomgaon will be The first pilot project, which The Department of Cooperatives (DoC) will implement under the Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Ministry.*

*The idea of rural development in Bangladesh is one of the driving forces of independence. Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh*

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*Mujibur Rahman, considered the village the centre of development and prosperity. In Article 16 of the independent country's constitution, Bangabandhu promised that the state would take adequate measures for the radical transformation of rural areas through agricultural revolution, rural electrification, and development of cottage industries and other industries, which will address education, communication and public health, and persistent urban-rural disparities. According to the current government's 2018 election manifesto, this research shows improved roads, communication, clean water, modern health care and medical care, quality education, and sewage and waste management. All the facilities of a modern city should be provided to every village by increasing the supply of electricity and fuel and expanding the market for quality consumer goods, including computers, high-speed internet facilities, and electrical appliances.*

**Keywords:** SDG, GDP, BARD, DoC, LGRD & C

## **Introduction**

This study addresses The Thematic Areas of the Conference SDG GOAL 11, Sustainable Cities and Communities. In this goal target, 11.8 is Strong National and Regional Development Planning. Descriptively said, Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning. In the general purpose of this study, the size, population and topographical diversity of villages in different regions of Bangladesh have been observed. Because of climate change, there are challenges in building sustainable infrastructure. To address this diversity and challenge, action has been taken to build adequate, sustainable infrastructure and expand civic amenities. The study's specific objectives are to identify the desired facilities for implementing My Village My town. Formulation of the desired model village based on the opinion of public representatives and people. To identify the challenge and opportunity of government in implementing My Village My town. The ruling party's election manifesto for the 11th National Election of Bangladesh was a 92-page document that included specific sectoral plans and goals based on the governing party's previous two terms. The manifesto's main slogan is "My Village—My Town." The central idea is to bring modern urban amenities to every village in Bangladesh. Rural development received the highest political significance and policy priority through this slogan for the first time in our country.

Initiatives will be taken to provide every village with modern town facilities, such as developed roads, communication facilities, safe drinking water, modern health care and proper treatment, standard education, developed sewage and waste management, electricity and fuel

supply, computer and high-speed internet facilities, electric equipment and standard consumer goods. Employment opportunities will be created through the establishment.

In fulfilling their commitment, the government has already taken a very comprehensive and planned approach. "Education, infrastructure development, and planned village urbanization. The planned urbanization of villages will assist village growth centers (rural markets) in growing sustainably, thus contributing to the country's development journey.

Pomgaon, a remote village in Cumilla's Monoharganj, will be transformed into a model village as part of the "Bangabandhu Model Village" project. The Local Government, Rural Development, and Cooperatives Ministry's Department of Cooperatives has taken the initiative as part of the ruling Awami League's election pledge to establish self-sufficient villages, as envisioned by Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The initiative is part of the project "My Village, My Town." The government intends to build ten model villages with all modern urban amenities in nine districts.

The government has already disbursed Tk 4993.90 crore and plans to assist 5000 people living in these villages by June 2024. All civic amenities will be provided in all villages to relieve the already-overburdened capital, other metropolitan cities, and district towns. The Cumilla's Pomgaon will be the first pilot project.

Pomgaon will have electricity, water, health, education, improved sanitation, waste management, modern roads and bridges, markets, playgrounds, parks, and recreation centres as a self-sufficient village. Small and large-scale industrial units will be established in the village to create adequate employment opportunities. The initiative will reduce disparities and bridge towns and villages.

"Different ministries will work together to ensure all kinds of benefits to citizens, and we plan to achieve a 25% increase in productivity in the agricultural sector of those ten villages by ensuring the best use of the village's natural and human resources through these joint ventures. Each village will establish cooperative societies to ensure socioeconomic, cultural, and cultural development. The government will also give the villagers a Tk 2 crore loan with a 3% interest rate. Along with Cumilla's Pomgaon, Tungipara's Patgati-Sriramkathi in Gopalganj, Charbhaga Miyarchar of Bhedarganj in Shariatpur, Mushuddi of Dharanbari in Tangail, Char Bhatiani of Madarganj in Jamalpur, Dongriya of South Sunamganj, Parala of Manirampur in Jashore, Ratiya in Mithapukur in Rangpur, Hosnabad of Gouranadi and Char Komisonar of Muladi in Barishal will soon be transformed into model villages.

### **Objectives of the study**

This study aims to assess the opportunities and barriers that exist in the current context for delivering all of the city's facilities to the villages. The preparation of this paper contains a few specific objectives. These are

- To investigate the variables that impact the happiness of Villagers in my village my city concept and to consider the expectations.
- To have exposure to the expectation of Villagers.
- To get significant knowledge about the individual Migration expectation of the different levels.

### **Literature Review**

Sustainable development is commonly discussed in terms of environmental considerations, but from the perspective of a rural community, sustainable development must address how the people of the community. The community generates income to support its rural lifestyle. When considering employment as part of sustainability discussions, it is common to think of jobs that will last forever. However, the reality of modern rural and urban life is that economic conditions change rapidly, so any discussion of sustainable employment must take place in a dynamic context in which different types of employment evolve as economic conditions change. While market signals can, in theory, provide the information and conditions for this dynamic process, the paper argues that rural areas' nature makes markets likely to provide sustainable employment (water, David fresh, 1991).

Rapid urbanization has already become a defining feature of China's socioeconomic transition. The characteristics and problems of villages in the Beijing metropolitan region are highlighted in this paper. The paper also investigates the role of villages in the metropolitan region in the urbanization process. This paper presents the Village System Planning of Changing Districts in Beijing as an example. According to the findings of a study on the economic and spatial typologies of villages in the Changing District, the villages are divided into three categories in the planning. Finally, through the categorization guidelines, Village System Planning intends to solve the problems of villages against the backdrop of rapid urbanization to achieve the sustainable development of rural areas (Whiffing, Zhao, 2009).

The majority of India's population still lives in villages. A lot of work must be done to clean up the villages. Water supply, sanitation, indoor air quality, solid waste management, and renewable energy are some of the aspects of a clean village. All of these aspects have various alternatives, each with its own set of benefits and drawbacks. Significant work is done

in some areas, such as water supply, while much work is required in others, such as sanitation. We can learn a lot from the successes and failures of various alternatives. Keeping up with technology Clean village projects should incorporate technology and digital design, resulting in a village that is not only clean but also smart. The government plans to start a massive campaign to bring all the city's civic amenities to the villages. This project to build growth centres across the country is in the planning stage. All of these issues are addressed in the paper regarding Maharashtra and India. This discussion intends to provide important inputs and alternatives to policymakers for them to redirect and reformulate policy. Engineering students can design and implement projects for a clean and smart village, which will help them develop their skills. The paper concludes with recommendations for effectively creating a Clean and Smart Village (Kulkarni, Dr. Milind, 2015) .

According to the draft action plan prepared by the Local Government Department (LGD) under the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, Under this mega project titled 'Amar Gram Amar Shihar', many goals have been set such as building road connectivity, telecommunications with internet connectivity, health centres, drainage and waste management. Only for the work implemented through this ministry, an initial expenditure of one and a half lakh crores has been projected. The government has also decided to develop 15 villages as pilot model villages as an initial step in implementing this vast campaign. The experience of implementing the pilot model village is expected to facilitate the expansion of modern civic facilities in other towns of the country.

### **15 model villages will be developed in 8 divisions of countries:**

Apart from this, the remaining seven villages, one each along Haor, Coastal Area, Pahari Elka, Char Area, Barendra Area, Bill Area and Economic Zone will be made Model Villages. Implementation of development activities in these areas is complicated. And if model villages are implemented in these areas, the implementation of the master plan for rural development will be much easier.

Apart from economic deprivation, social and cultural issues will also be given importance in the model village. As announced by the government, the model village will have communication and market infrastructure, modern health services, quality education, clean water, information technology facilities and high-speed internet facilities, improved sewage and waste management, community space and recreation facilities, banking facilities, rural employment, electricity and It have been said to keep all facilities including an increase in energy supply, increase in production through agricultural modernization and mechanization.

Various ministries and departments are already proposing 116 new projects to expand modern civic amenities. For this action, the Ministry of Local Government is carrying out a detailed survey based on which several new projects will be taken up. The final cost will be communicated after the surveys are completed. 237 ongoing projects of various Ministries and Departments are also included in this plan as they are compatible with 'Amar Gram Amar Shahar'.

The list of pilot villages will be finalized through an inter-ministerial committee. The local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister is the head of the committee. After that, various organizations, including the Directorate of Local Government Engineering, Directorate of Public Health Engineering, Directorate of Cooperatives, and Ministry of Agriculture, will start the implementation of model pilot villages. Meanwhile, many organizations are also doing their preparatory work. Many organizations have already started preparations.

### **Model Villages Surveys are Underway of LGED**

A total of 36 surveys are underway at the cost of taka 28 crores to ensure maximum service in model villages. The survey is going on with all types of villages in the country. How about a model village in the Haor area, or how about a Char area; Where there is no means of communication except by sea, how all the civic amenities can be delivered will come up in the survey report. Ensuring quality education and modern medical services in model villages, what steps will be taken for employment these issues are also expected to come up in the survey report.

The 15 villages that will be developed as model villages have been initially identified but are not being revealed now due to the fear of various complications. After completing the survey work, it will be possible to start the pilot project in the next one to two years. After that, all the villages of the country will be developed as model villages in a phased manner, where the city will have all the civic facilities. Then people will move towards the village rather than the city.

### **Bangabandhu Model Village of Directorate of Cooperatives**

The Directorate of Cooperatives under the Rural Development and Cooperative Department has proposed to establish Bangabandhu Model Village as a pilot project in 10 villages. If the pilot project is successful, model villages will be established in all the villages of the country.

On the occasion of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's birth centenary celebrations, the Directorate has taken the initiative to build a Bangabandhu Model Village. A project proposal of Tk 49.93 crore has already been sent to the Planning Commission. These projects are targeted to be implemented by 2024. Much land in the village remains

uncultivated, and there are many ponds, where fish are not cultivated. There are no fruit or forest trees on either side of rural roads. The yard of the house is not used for productive activities. Due to a lack of motivation, lack of information and lack of skills and technology, rural areas are wasting a lot of natural resources including human resources.

Therefore, apart from crop cultivation, one meat and one dairy farm will be set up in each village under the proposed project. For this purpose 500, member cooperative societies will be formed in each village. Besides training the members, under the project, each village will be subsidized for the purchase of two tractors and transplanters and one harvester each. The members of the association will pay 30 percent for the purchase of agricultural machinery and the remaining 70 percent will be given from the project.

Two hybrid cow-rearing models will be introduced for rearing cows and cows in the village. For this reason, a loan facility will be given to those interested in rearing cows and cows from the special fund of the project. If the project is implemented, it is estimated that the agricultural production in the village will increase by 25 percent.

Besides, a community building will be set up in each village. Where there will be small-scale warehouses to store the produce. Each association will provide a PUP truck to transport the produce to the nearest market or Prothcentre. The products produced by the members will be marketed under the cooperative society's own name (as a brand). Besides, it has been mentioned in the project proposal that every cooperative society will be linked with the e-commerce platform of the Directorate of Cooperatives.

A fund of two crore Taka will be created in each village society for distribution among the members of the society. Any member will get an interest-free loan facility of up to 50 thousand taka on a demand basis after training under the project. However, it has been proposed to give loans up to Tk 2 lakh to the entrepreneurs of agricultural products and the food processing sector. However, the loan has to be returned with 3 percent service charge. Installments will start six months after taking the loan.

Under the project, there will be a two-story community building on an area of 3468 sq.ft where there will be Bangabandhu Library, Bangabandhu Corner, Community Hall, Training Room, Digital Service Centre, Agricultural Products Storage and Exhibition Centre. Even if they are model villages, poverty will not be eradicated in the villages. The poverty rate is expected to come down to 7 percent as per the project proposal. The Directorate of Cooperatives has set this target to reduce the poverty rate considering the poverty rate of pre-Covid countries. According to the latest (2019) Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS)

estimates, the poverty rate in the country is 20.5 percent. But post-Covid, the poverty rate in the country has increased to more than 40 percent, according to a survey by several research organizations.

Among the ten villages selected for the pilot project, seven divisions are in Dhaka and two villages each are in the Dhaka division. These are; Patgati-Sriramkandi of Tungipara in Gopalganj district, CharbhagaMiarchar village of Vedragganjupazila of Shariatpur and Honabad of Gournadi in Barisal and Char commissioner village of Muladi. Besides, Charbhatiani in Madarganjupazila in Jamalpur, Pomgaw, in Manoharganj in Comilla, Dungria in Sunamganj, Parala in Minarampur in Jessore and Ratia in Mithapukur in Rangpur.

An expenditure of around 50croresTakahas been proposed to implement the project. The project is targeted for completion in 2024. Out of the total 500 jobs that will be created in each village of the project, 30 percent, or 150 are women.

Along with the implementation of the project, the cooperative directorate said that to ensure a total of 17 services, including health, education, electricity, and ICT at the upazila level, the cooperation of the related departments will be required.

### **Model Village of LGED in Haor area**

The Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) wants to establish model villages under the infrastructure and quality of life development project in the Haor region. Under this ongoing project, there was initially a plan to pilot five model villages. Later, the organization decided to set up 2 model villages due to implementation complications.

Chandegaon in Bisambar of Sunamganj and Hamidpalli of Mithamain in Kishoreganj has been identified as model villages.

Along with infrastructure development, initiatives will be taken to improve the quality of life, socioeconomic development, and education quality, reduce food shortage and increase income in the Haor area in the model village. Emphasis should be placed on growing income-generating activities, expanding small businesses, achieving self-reliance, creating employment, increasing transparency, establishing unity, mental development, social development, poverty alleviation, capital formation and women empowerment.

### **Methodology**

#### ***Study Methods***

The research was conducted using qualitative and quantitative methods, incorporating exploratory and descriptive data. Data was collected from various people living in rural areas.



***Study Area***

Data was collected from two villages in the Cumilla district.

***Data Collection***

A checklist was prepared for data collection from each selected Union Parishad to understand the types of services provided by Union Parishad and expenditures in various development sectors. There will be two focused group discussions, two with UP officials, two with union-level employees from the nation-building department, two with youths, and four with adults.

***Key findings & suggestion***

The information that emerged from the village focus group discussion is very surprising. No one wants to leave the village “The open field, the sky kisses the forehead, but the feet are dust, Small villages are nests of shadow-encrusted peace” (অবারিতমাঠ, গগনললাটচুমেতব পদধূলি, ছায়া-সুনিবিড়শান্তির নীড় ছোট ছোট গ্রামগুলি) (ঠাকুর, রবীন্দ্রনাথ, ২০২০) like Rabindranath's poem and move to the city or abroad. The facilities that will remain in the village have been observed very carefully.

**Transformation of Education**

The number of unemployed people in villages is increasing day by day in the formal education system. If they can be given technical education and employment in the village, then those who will not migrate from the village to the city or abroad. And when going abroad, skilled human resources will be exported abroad. The country can earn foreign currency, which will significantly enrich our remittance flow.

In the village, individual-centered financial solvency means they can provide their children education in a better environment. And the village can create a better learning environment. The government can spread the education system to rural areas by decentralizing it. That is to say, to compel those educational institutions providing good quality and quality public and private primary, secondary, higher secondary and higher education in the city to open branches in the villages by enacting laws. and maintaining the quality of education by providing adequate human resources. In that case, the village's people will get the city's services.

**Setup Food Processing Industry**

On the other hand, we have agricultural villages. A lot of vegetables are produced in the village during the peak season, but due to the lack of proper prices, the farmers sell the product at very low prices or destroy the product on the ground. Mainly as winter vegetables are produced more than our demand, the demand for the product is very high in the market at

a certain time. Farmers do not get the real price as supply is more than demand. In that case, it is possible to supply products to the country and international markets throughout the year by maintaining the quality of the products by having a regional food processing industry. On the one hand, the educated unemployed will get employment in the village and on the other hand, the farmers will get the proper price for the products. On the other hand, the product will play a unique role in GDP.

In that case, the government can build these institutions by providing very low-interest loans through green financing. Loans will be given only to those who have received proper training from training institutes established in the area affiliated with the government. When the people of the village become financially sound, then individual-centered infrastructure development will be achieved. Government should ensure proper provision of roads, technology and electricity to facilitate the supply of goods.

### **Implement Rural compact housing law**

In 2041, the country's population may reach 22 crores. The country's agricultural land is currently decreasing at a 0.5-1 percent rate. A large part of it is being converted into housing. If this rate continues due to the reduction of agricultural land, food security will be disturbed and the biodiversity of the village will be destroyed.

Therefore, a plan will be taken to construct a compact township consisting of multi-storied buildings ensuring all civic amenities in populated villages. As a result, road electricity, other infrastructure construction and maintenance costs will be significantly reduced. Villages will become flood free easily. If such an ideal village has schools, hospitals and clinics, education and health services can be provided easily. Agricultural land will be saved and the country will remain livable in the long run. For this reason, a plan has been taken to verify the feasibility of rural housing or compact housing.

### **We have to think holistically to take all the civic benefits of the city to the village**

We have to go step by step through decentralization. All facilities of the city, including the creation of employment opportunities, and health education, must be ensured at the district level first. Then these facilities must be taken to the upazila level. And in this way, we will be able to get closer to establishing my model village. As a result, the human pressure in big cities will be reduced.

### **Improvement of entertainment and medical Services**

Parks and community centers should be built to conduct recreation and social functions in the village properly. There is no park in the village to entertain children. So parks can be established. In that case, the

infrastructure should be built keeping the rural history and tradition in mind. In the village, the financial solvency of the people in all areas is not equal. For proper maintenance and beautification of the ponds in the village, integrated circular roads can be constructed along the pond roads with financial contributions from the government and individual and partnership levels. On one hand, the ponds will continue to exist, on the other hand, the beauty will blossom and people will be health conscious.

Village people have to come to the city to get medical facilities. Decentralization is essential in setting up hospitals to provide medical facilities to the people in the villages. The government should compel the appropriate authorities to establish hospitals in rural areas instead of centrally located in urban areas. A notification may be issued stressing the ease of obtaining loans and lower interest rates for setting up hospitals, especially in rural areas.

### **Establishment of upazila employment office**

It is very difficult to procure the labor required for village agriculture and infrastructure construction from one's village. Especially in the Comilla region, workers come from North Bengal. Also, the shortage is met by own labor of neighboring districts and Comilla. Generally in Comilla region Kandirpar, Railway Station, Paduar Bazar Bishwaroad, Comilla Cantonment Saheb Bazar, Kangshnagar, Devidwar, which gathers in places related to market and bus station. But there is no specific place for them to stand or sit. Many times brokers are seen in these places. During my stay in South Korea, I saw that there are zone-based offices to ensure the proper utilization of human resources. These workers register through proper registration. From there the local government gets a fixed amount and the broker who acts as media through the office gets a percentage. Suppose such a system is added to Bangladesh, on one hand. In that case, the proper utilization of human resources will be ensured, on the other hand, government revenue will increase & entrepreneurship will be developed.

### **Expanding areas of local government revenue growth**

Although there is talk of strengthening the local government, the revenue generated from various types of haat bazaar, and birth registration at the union level is deposited in the central government. In the case of birth registration, the fee set by the government is only collected by the central government. But four to five times the amount is collected at the customer level, which has no record. Hence local government can be strengthened by ensuring proper fee collection in the light of transparency and accountability by ensuring governance. Also, all the CNG stations at the village level are collected unannounced as a type of gate pass. which is out of order. But the CNG drivers are forced to pay the amount. That

money is going into the pockets of a certain class of people. If the said money can be collected through the local government through legal legislation, then the financial capacity of the Union Parishad will increase.

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