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Bangladesh and Current Development Issues

Bangladesh has a rich cultural history of over 4000 years with centuries of stability under some dynasties such as the Buddhist Pala Dynasty which ruled for four hundred years during the early years of the Contemporary Era. During the Medieval years the area was one of the richest areas until problems between Indian empires and between Hindus and Buddhists brought conflict to the area. (EFA 2000).

Arabic merchants traveling for spices and silk introduced the area to Islam in about the 12th century. The Bengal area was controlled by the British East India Company in the mid 1600s. (EFA 2000)

More recently the history has been full of changes. In 1947 the Bengal region was controlled by the British. When India became free of British occupation two regions of India with majority citizenry of Muslims separated from India becoming West Bengal and East Bengal. These two areas separated by over 500 miles had little day to day interaction so it was only a matter of time before East Bengal decided to declare independence. Finally the country of Bangladesh came into existence in 1971.

The area of Bangladesh is small; according the CIA World Facts it is less than the size of Iowa. Yet the population is 7th largest in the world. The largest demographic is the age group of 15 to 64 years of age, from 0 to 14 years in age accounts for about 34. 3% and 65 years and older is a very small, 4. 7%.

Bangladesh has many developmental projects which are being addressed by the population, the academic researchers of Bangladesh and to some extent

the government. Academics work with universities throughout the world to solve problems of hunger, water, flooding, health issues and educational goals. The United Nations plays a big role in setting developmental goals for Bangladesh. In the U. N. Millennium Goals for 2012 Bangladesh is included most importantly in reaching a goal of drinking water for 100% of the population, increasing quality education for all students, and improved health care by 2012. These goals have been improved in the last 40 years and there is hope for more successes by 2012. (Lee 2005)

Other stakeholders for setting developmental goals are local institutions and measures are being taken so more people will enter local government. Huque (2007) writes that “ New institutions have been created to replace the old with the stated aims being to improve the delivery of services and extend participation at the local level.”

The problems are still many though. For example the number of physicians for every 1000 people was reported to be 0. 295 (CIA 2007) and the number of hospital beds for every 1000 people was reported to be 0. 4 beds (CIA 2005).

A major problem for Bangladesh has always been a problem of freshwater supply for two reasons. Bangladesh is situated on the river deltas of several rivers on the coastline of the sea. Challenges from monsoon seasons each year and now from global warming have made flooding a critical problem for many years; the floods causing many deaths. New ways of living have been developed such as living on floating houses all year round and other innovative solutions are being offered and used.

Freshwater is a problem inland because the water from wells drilled into the ground contains arsenic from the natural geology. Many solutions have been offered including new types of pumps with filters and pills to purify the water as well as changing the diets of people who drink the water. These are difficult goals to reach because people don't change their habits easily.

Education is another common way to measure development in Bangladesh. All education is managed at the top by PMED which is in charge of both primary education and non-formal types of education. It has two directorates beneath it. Another government department, the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) is in charge of the hands-on, day-to-day management. So there are many stakeholders in the education sector of Bangladesh including the parents and children.

One last important development goal that has been a government focus is to make Bangladesh more inviting for doing business. The World Bank (2007) reported that Bangladesh is rated 107 out of 183 economies for “ ease of doing business.” For “ starting a business” it is rated at 79 out of 183 and the World Bank expects Bangladesh's rating to improve.

The most promising trends are the successes in education and getting more people to participate in politics. The most discouraging trends is the terrible poverty and pollution.

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