

SOCIAL CAPITAL IN RURAL DINAJPUR

CARE RURAL LIVELIHOODS PROGRAMME

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ACRONYMS

BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BDT	Bangladesh Taka (USD 1 ≈ BDT 60 at time of publication)
BNP	Bangladesh National Party
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
DFID	Department For International Development
FFS	Farmer Field School
FT	Field Trainer
GO-IF	GO-Interfish
GSS	Gono Shahajya Sangstha (an NGO)
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SSS	Sustainable Social Services
STW	Shallow Tubewell
UP	Union Parishad
VGD	Vulnerable Group Development
VGF	Vulnerable Group Funds

GLOSSARY

<i>amon</i>	main monsoon rice crop
<i>bari</i>	homestead
<i>boro</i>	main irrigated rice crop
GO-Interfish	Greater Opportunities for Integrated Rice-Fish Culture project
<i>khas</i> land	government land
<i>Khatrria</i>	Hindu warrior caste
<i>madrassa</i>	religious educational institution
<i>para</i>	hamlet, cluster of houses
Shabge	vegetable
<i>shadar</i>	labour contractor
<i>shalish</i>	local informal court
<i>t.amon</i>	transplanted <i>amon</i>
<i>tara</i>	hand operated water pump that lifts water from a greater depth than other pumps
Union	administrative unit comprising several villages
Union Parishad	elected union council
<i>Upazilla</i>	sub-district level administrative unit comprising several unions
virilocal	System of residence where bride moves to groom's home

SUMMARY

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Social capital is a key element in the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework that has guided CARE Bangladesh's natural resources activities since the late 1990s, but no attempt has hitherto been made to define what it is, to consider how it might be promoted, or to determine how it may have been affected by the various interventions that have been made. This study enquires into the forms that social capital takes and asks how it is accumulated and manipulated. In combination with other planned investigations, it will seek ultimately to provide a firmer basis for preparing and assessing the effects of rights-based natural resource activities. It is based mainly on a short investigation carried out in one *para* over a two-week period, which used PRA-based methods and was built around a series of individual household case studies.

1.2 The paper falls into five main parts. Section 2 reviews the literature on social capital, introducing a series of related concepts that inform the subsequent discussion. Section 3 provides an introduction to the study community and the key actors within it. Section 4 lays out a series of household case studies illustrating the different forms and permutations in which individual social capital may appear at different levels in the communal hierarchy. Section 5 draws on the case materials to investigate the types of relationship through which social capital is expressed. Section 6 then begins to open up the question of how the two CARE projects (GO-IF and Shabge) and other NGO interventions have interacted with and been shaped by pre-existing social capital.

2. WHAT SOCIAL CAPITAL MEANS AND WHY IT MATTERS

2.1 Social capital first appeared in development discourse in the 1990s, but no clearly agreed definition has yet to emerge. Robert Putnam has been central to the debate. Although his concept of social capital differs somewhat from that of DFID's Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, from which CARE's own approach derives, it represents a more developed working through of the relevant issues, and is adopted as the primary framework for our discussion.

2.2 To Putnam, social capital is made up three interacting and mutually reinforcing elements: *trust*, *norms of reciprocity* and *networks of civic engagement*. Reciprocity may be *balanced*, referring to exchanges of items or services of equivalent value; or *generalised* through continuing relationships of exchange which are unrequited at a particular point in time, but carry the mutual expectation that a benefit granted now should be repaid in the future. The generalised form is by far the more significant.

2.3 Networks, characterised by interpersonal communication and exchange, are either *horizontal*, bringing together agents of equivalent status or power, or *vertical*, linking unequal agents in asymmetric relations of hierarchy and dependence. Networks of civic engagement, like neighbourhood associations, represent intense horizontal interaction and are the essential form of social capital. A vertical network cannot sustain social trust and cooperation in the same way. Patron-client relations, as a type of vertical network, involve interpersonal exchange and reciprocal obligations, but the vertical bonds of clientism work against horizontal group organisation. Kinship and friendship are in some respects comparable to horizontal ties of civic engagement, but these "strong" interpersonal connections are ultimately less important than their "weak" counterparts, like acquaintanceship. The stocks of

social capital found in effective *civic societies* regenerate themselves in virtuous circles, whilst the *uncivic society*, with its lack of generalised trust, is characterised by vicious circles.

2.4 Putnam defines social capital as a purely collective and unequivocally positive entity that is exclusively associated with horizontal networks and mainly characterised by generalised reciprocity and “weak”, non kin-based types of relationship. DFID, by contrast, sees it as “the social resources upon which people draw in pursuit of their livelihood objectives”. This both casts the net wider to include vertical connections, and treats social capital as something that may be accumulated by the individual, rather than as a collective phenomenon. In so doing, it also opens up the possibility that social capital may embody certain more negative characteristics.

2.5 Despite such differences, Putnam, DFID and most other analysts are agreed that social capital performs a number of important functions: reducing transactions costs and risk; discouraging free-riding and encouraging sustainable practices; facilitating the sharing of knowledge; reducing vulnerability to shocks; compensating for a shortage of physical or human capital among the poor; and facilitating access to external resources; as well as being valuable in itself.

3. AN OVERVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY

3.1 Azimpara, where the research was carried out, lies within the Union of Panchgram in Dinajpur district. The community is divided into distinct Muslim and Hindu quarters.

3.2 The wealthiest individuals are two Muslim brothers, Azim and Aziz, who between them own 100 acres. As Azim has aged, Aziz has emerged as the dominant force, working in conjunction with his two sons, one of whom has been selected as male leader of the CARE Farmer Field School (FFS). Azim and Aziz are grandsons of Piru, who first settled the area some fifty years ago and founded a dominant lineage. This has now both subdivided and incorporated other smaller units through marriage, and currently comprises three sections, with a total of 32 households. When Piru first came to the area, he was accompanied by a distant cousin, who started a second lineage, Lineage 2. The Muslim picture is completed by a grouping of six mainly poor households, all of whom are descended from individuals who attached themselves to the community some time after it was founded.

3.3 We were able to find out less about the history of the Hindus, but it appears that they have actually been resident in the area for longer. Despite this, the present structure of kinship relations amongst the Hindus is somewhat simpler, with three lineages connected by single marriage ties. The largest, which was founded by an individual named Bocha, dominates this part of the community and currently comprises 18 households. Among their number are three brothers who control most of the land in the Hindu quarter. One of these, Bhabesh, has assumed the role of leadership within the Hindu community, and his wife has become the woman leader under the CARE FFS. The second lineage appears to have been established at about the same time, and accounts for a further 14 mainly poorer households. The third lineage, which traces its ancestry in the community back only two generations, comprises only four households. A small number of the poorest households, scattered across the different lineages, have converted to Christianity.

3.4 In all, there are 77 households, of which more than half are Muslim, a third Hindu and 12% Christian. The Muslims are predominantly small farmers, operating between 0.5 and 2.5 acres; but there are also substantial big and medium farmer minorities, operating more than 7.5 acres and from 2.5 – 7.5 acres respectively, and smaller numbers of marginal and landless households, with 0.05 – 0.5 acres and less than 0.05 acres respectively. The Hindus as a whole are much poorer, with a clear majority of marginal and landless households and far fewer small households, but only a slightly lower proportion of big and medium farm households.

3.5 The preliminary picture of the community that has been presented provides the first opportunity to starting adapting and applying some of the concepts introduced in section 2. In particular, they help to form a more nuanced and culturally specific view of the critical distinction between strong (primarily kin-based) and weak (acquaintance-based) relationships. These emerge not so much as mutually exclusive and opposed categories, but as poles of a continuum that begins with the immediate nuclear family, which provides the strongest types of relationship, and then continues through the progressively weaker categories of siblings, the wider lineage and the religion-based group, before arriving ultimately at members of other religions and communities.

4. SOCIAL CAPITAL: HOUSEHOLD CASE STUDIES

4.1 Taking DFID's broad and individually focussed definition of "the social resources upon which people draw in pursuit of their livelihood objectives" as a point of departure, but keeping Putnam's conceptual framework in mind, social capital is explored primarily through the medium of nine household case studies. Five are Muslim and four Hindu, with the selection covering the spectrum from the most wealthy families at one extreme to some of the poorest at the other.

4.2 An attempt is made in each case to determine:

- how the household fits into the broader framework of kinship and the degree to which this potentially enables it to draw on "strong" kin-based relations;
- the extent to which the household actually contracts horizontal/reciprocal linkages;
- whether these are primarily balanced or generalised in nature, and the degree to which they are conducted within the circle of strong kin-based relationships or extend beyond it;
- the extent and nature of any vertical (asymmetric) linkages;
- the degree to which these, in turn, are conducted within or beyond the circle of strong kin-based and wider "semi-strong" relations;
- whether the vertical linkages tend to be more of the single-, or of the multi-stranded, patron-client type;
- the degree to which the household is able to secure weak, bridging-type connections that extend beyond the *para*;
- the implications of such connections for the structuring of intra-*para* relations.

4.3 We begin with **Aziz**, the effective overall leader of the community. As noted earlier, his household falls within the main lineage, and sits at the centre of an extensive network of what Putnam would describe as "strong" kin-based links, although a powerful household such as this has comparatively little need for the networks of mutually supportive reciprocal relations. He is the second largest land owner, leasing out the greater part of his holding, and directly managing the remainder himself. The vertical relationships arising from his land and other assets dominate the household's social capital, and provide the foundation upon which

many of its other significant linkages are built. The share-cropped land is worked by 20 households, some of whom are drawn from within the circle of “strong” kin relationships, but many of whom only enjoy “weaker” linkages to Aziz. For the cultivation of the remaining 10 acres, he relies upon temporary labour drawn from 32 local households, and these again cover a spectrum from the very strongly to the much more weakly related. Relatively few of these relationships are of the multi-stranded patron-client type, and even those that are do not tend to involve very extensive obligations.

4.4 His powerful economic position enables Aziz to play an important part in *para* and wider institutions. He is a dominant figure on the *para shalish*, and also participates in the village *shalish*. He sits on the *para* mosque committee as well; which among other things involves overseeing the donation of meat and money at Eid to poor Muslims, and is involved in running the *madrassa*. Aziz’s wealth has also enabled him to establish contacts and exert influence well beyond the immediate community. In all, he counts some 30 leading local figures among his acquaintances, and together these comprise a major store of Putnam’s critical “weak” relationships, as well as representing important “bridging” links. These various external linkages enable Aziz to access key resources for distribution within the *para*. Some of these are allocated to households from his own lineage who are not properly entitled to them, providing a clear example of the kind of abuse that can arise where “strong” relationships figure prominently in the social landscape.

4.5 **Aminul** is Aziz’s son. With assistance from his father and uncle, he has secured a semi-independent economic base, and is now being groomed for a role of leadership. He has already taken responsibility for dealing with NGOs, including CARE, on behalf of the Muslim households, and has begun to build his own bridging relationships with the *Upazilla*. But for the present, most of his key relations are still confined to the *para* and the immediately surrounding area. His household interacts most intensively with the immediate family circle in his *bari*, which includes his mother, his elder brother and his wife, and his unmarried siblings. Collectively, this group engages in an extensive form of generalised reciprocity, where members can be relied upon for support in child care and nursing in times of sickness as well as providing a source of small cash loans, small commodity exchanges, or assistance if natural disaster strikes. Beyond the immediate family, Aminul, like his father, enjoys an extensive network of largely single-stranded “weaker” relations revolving mainly around the operation of his land.

4.6 **Abul Kalam** is a small Muslim landowner who is a full CARE GO-Interfish Farmer Field School member and is distantly related to the most powerful households. His closest links are with his mother and his brother, and broadly replicate the pattern of strong relations with generalised reciprocity exhibited by the previous case. He has 0.75 acres of his own land and shares in a further 0.75 acres from Aminul’s brother, to whom he is also linked in a number of other ways. In the wider community, Abul enjoys only limited and mainly reciprocal relations of various kinds with 6 other Muslim households, as well as single-stranded relations with 5 Hindu households, and other weak linkages of a similar nature beyond the *para*.

4.7 **Momena Bewa** is a poor Muslim widow whose husband belonged to the less influential branch of the main lineage. She is a GO-Interfish (GO-IF) associate member. She owns the 0.12 acres of land on which her house is built, and shares her home with her own remaining unmarried son. Her two other sons, one of whom is a medium farmer and the other of whom is a small farmer, live in the same *bari*. Her closest relationships are with her sons and two stepsons, who also live nearby. She often looks after their children, and the family group provides several other types

of mutual help. Momena's case therefore provides another example of strong relations combined with generalised reciprocity. In addition, she enjoys quite close relations with the three wealthiest Muslim families in the neighbouring *bari*, all of whom can be relied upon to provide some help in natural disasters and other major crises. In return she carries out small domestic tasks, and sometimes looks after the grandchildren. The picture of her social capital is completed by a handful of more marginal weaker relationships with other Muslim and Hindu households, whom she helps with child-care, with whom she exchanges small items, and from whom she receives various minor types of assistance. She has hardly any significant contacts beyond the *para*.

4.8 **Shamsul Alam** is a Muslim labourer and tenant with few kin. He owns no land, but currently shares in 1.25 acres from Aziz and Azim, and lives on the edge of a bamboo plot owned by Hazar, the third richest person in the *para*. Shamsul has a brother, but he is also very poor and the pair are unable to provide each other with very much support. With his wife having no kin of her own in the community, and with only one or two relations elsewhere with whom they maintain much contact, the household has come to rely much more heavily than is normal upon "weaker" extra-family links. The primary contact is with Hazar, upon whom they depend, in patron-client fashion, for a range of different types of assistance. The household also enjoys similar but less extensive links with Azim and Aziz, and maintain a series of mainly single-stranded weak relationships with 15 other Muslim and 10 Hindu households. Finally, again perhaps reflecting their lack of kinship ties, Shamsul's household has proved keen to seize opportunities offered by NGOs, and are associate CARE members.

4.9 **Bhabesh**, as we saw earlier, is regarded as the leader of the Hindu part of the *para*. A direct descendant of the original settler, and the brother of one of the two richest Hindus, he enjoys a more modest version of the extended strong kinship network found among the leading Muslims. The group of brothers forms a cohesive and mutually supportive unit, exchanging small loans, agricultural materials and advice, and assistance in times of distress, in another example of generalised reciprocity. But again replicating a pattern noted earlier among the leading Muslims, such relationships are not exclusively conducted within this inner circle.

4.10 Bhabesh has inherited 4.5 acres of land and shares in an additional 1.25 from two moderately well off Muslims, who are not closely related to the most powerful households. He directly manages all of his own land, and hires labourers from 26 different households within the community, a minority of whom are also connected to him in other ways as clients.

4.11 Together with his brother and the head of the other comparatively wealthy Hindu households, Bhabesh plays a leading part in the deliberations of the *para shalish*, and represents the *para* on the village bench. Another dimension of his leadership lies in his role as the key contact for NGOs wishing to establish a presence in the Hindu part of the *para*, and his wife has been selected as the woman community contact for CARE. Alongside the successful links forged with NGOs, Bhabesh has been able to establish further bridging connections with a range of key individuals in the surrounding area, and it is one of these "weak" contacts that has proved particularly helpful in accessing NGO resources. In the wider forum of the union, his membership of the Awami League earlier provided an entrée to the party Union committee, with its central influence on the distribution of official resources at the local level. The manner in which these were distributed was similar to that noted earlier with Aziz, with a proportion being channelled to "strongly" related but undeserving parties, and others going to those more genuinely in need.

4.12 **Tanni Chandra Roy** is a Hindu and belongs to the first and most powerful lineage. He is a village doctor and a full member of GO-IF. He owns 0.5 acres, of which 0.2 acres is shared out, and shares in a further 2.5 acres, most of which is owned by Azim. His closest relations are with his three married sons, with one of the nephews from the adjoining *bari*, and with each of their respective wives. As the senior partner, Tanni gives more than he receives, and taken as a whole, these relations represent a slightly modified version of the strong links with generalised reciprocity found in many of the other cases that have been discussed. In addition, Tanni has a network of wider and weaker relations extending to 27 other Hindu and 6 Muslim households within the community, virtually all of which revolve around the exchange of small commodities or of labour. His links beyond the community are much more limited.

4.13 **Atal Chandra** is another member of the most powerful Hindu lineage. His mother also comes from the *para* and is the sister of a big farmer. He owns and farms 0.25 acres and is a full GO-IF member. He shares a *bari* and enjoys generalised reciprocal relations with his father and his married brother. Links to his better off relations are not very close, but they can be relied upon to help if any Atal is involved in any disputes coming before the *shalish*. His other important set of relationships are with a number of the most powerful Muslim households, for whom Atal frequently works as a labourer, but none of these are of the patron-client type.

4.14 **Kirik Chandra** comes from the second and poorest of the three Hindu lineages and is a GO-IF associate member. He owns only 0.1 acres of land, and makes his living as a labourer and a rickshaw van puller. He lives on a tiny *bari* with his landless father and sharecropper brother at the fringe of the community, in an area separated from other members of his lineage. His father and brother assist in times of sickness but are unable to offer much other help, and by contrast with most of the other cases considered, Kirik's household may be taken as an example of a low strong link/low reciprocal engagement type. His main contacts are with the big Muslim landowners, for whom he works. He also enjoys more limited connections to the dominant Hindu lineage. Beyond this, Kirik exchanges interest-free loans with a handful of other landless households, and engages in one or two other relatively loose single-stranded relationships. The shortage of other forms of social capital is, however, to some extent compensated for by multiple NGO membership.

5. SOCIAL CAPITAL: BUILDING BLOCKS

5.1 Section 4 suggested a number of types of relationship through which social capital, in the broad DFID sense of the term, could be expressed and accumulated. In this section an attempt is made to delve more deeply into how these various building blocks work and inter-connect. A broad distinction is drawn, in the first instance, between relations that are largely internal to the community and those that are external in nature. The internal relations may then be further subdivided into those that are, in Putnam's sense, vertical and those that are horizontal.

5.2 Vertical relationships, or asymmetric links between parties of differing status, arise primarily in the sphere of agricultural production. In addition to the relationships between landlords and tenants, and between surplus farmers and labourers, further links are found between surplus farmers and both small farmers and tenants through the provision of tubewell water and power tiller services for ploughing. Other forms of internal vertical relationship include money lending for interest and the various types of charitable giving and support in times of hardship. Vertical relations also extend to the sphere of intra-communal negotiation and dispute resolution,

encompassing both bargaining around marriage contracts and the deliberations of the *shalish*. A final category of (generally) vertical relationship is found in the passing on of knowledge and advice about agricultural practices.

5.3 The various vertical and primarily economic relationships co-exist with a series of more horizontal or symmetric types of linkage. Some of these revolve around the joint ownership or use of various items and facilities, such as hand pumps and ponds. Others, like childcare and tending the sick, involve the exchange of services. Whilst the individual household normally provides the primary unit within which such forms of co-operation takes place, the residential compound or *bari* can also be highly significant in these instances. Other types of labour exchange are less constrained by such considerations and typically extend further beyond the *bari* based kin group. Even more common are the exchange of small interest-free cash loans. Small household items, including oil, rice, salt, onion, kerosene, chillies and coconut oil are circulated in a similar fashion, typically being repaid a few days later after the next market, and usually involving women. Such examples of generalised reciprocity are, however, normally confined to relatively small circles of households.

5.4 Beyond these internal relationships a number of links extend from the immediate community to the wider world. These include several general government services that find their way to the *para*, and residents from time to time may also need to approach officials on an individual basis for particular purposes. For the majority, whilst it may not always be impossible to take action on their own behalf, some form of intermediation, involving a combination of powerful insiders and local representatives, will often be required, although, in certain instances, powerful households are able to employ their external linkages largely or purely for their own benefit.

5.5 The earlier parts of this section and the preceding case studies have demonstrated the diversity of possible sources of social capital if the concept is defined in the more inclusive sense employed by DFID. But to what extent does the picture that has emerged conform to the more restrictive definition associated with Putnam's civic society? Following the criteria detailed in section 2.2 – 2.4 above, this depends upon an affirmative answer to three questions: whether networks of engagement are primarily structured along horizontal (symmetric) rather than vertical (asymmetric) lines; whether they are predominantly weak (acquaintance) as opposed to strong (kin-based); and whether norms of reciprocity are generalised rather than balanced in nature.

5.6 With regard to the first question, it is clear that relations are structured more along vertical than along horizontal lines. Within the community, the asymmetric links between landlords and tenants, and between the hirers and providers of labour, are central to the livelihoods of most, if not all households. These are accompanied, in turn, by secondary and equally asymmetric re-distributive mechanisms in the form of regular charitable giving and the more occasional provision of material support under conditions of individual or more generalised stress. Beyond the community, the links mediated by the relatively wealthy and powerful minority emerge as of greater importance than those that the majority of households are able to initiate on their own behalf. But at the same time, it should be noted that only quite a small minority of the vertical relations observed are of a clearly multi-stranded patron-client type, with those approximating to the single-stranded form in a clear majority.

5.7 Vertical relations are not then markedly patron-client in nature, but are they predominantly, in Putnam's sense, "strong"? Using the definitions developed in 3.5 above it is clear that comparatively strong relations predominate. We see, for

example, close kin providing each other with land, engaging in share-cropping relations, mutually exchanging irrigation water and linking in other less significant ways. We also see instances in both the Muslim and Hindu communities of leaders arranging access to VGD cards for kin who are not properly qualified to receive them. But, it is also apparent that vertical relations are much less likely than their horizontal counterparts to be contracted with other members of strongly associated (i.e. kin-based) groups. This is particularly so with regard to the key issues of labour hiring and tenancy.

5.8 The dominance of vertical relations in general leaves relatively little space for relations of a more reciprocal or horizontal type, but these still play a significant role for certain actors at least. This is most evident with regard to the powerful minority, who are able to participate in the local branches of political parties and other forms of association related to facilities such as schools and markets. The links thus formed, with their peers from surrounding communities and in the wider fora of the Union and *Upazilla*, enable them to perform a bridging function that, in turn, provides an additional dimension to the vertical relations contracted within the community. Their poorer counterparts, by contrast, have relatively little opportunity to take part in civic associations. In their case, such horizontal relations as can be maintained are confined mainly to the reciprocal exchange of caring services, small commodities and interest-free cash loans, and even this more truncated form of social capital is not available on a significant scale in all instances.

5.9 It is also evident that the great majority of the horizontal relations that do exist are strong rather than weak in nature. There are, however, some limited exceptions to this general rule, where poorer people are able to collaborate across religious and communal divides. And finally, whilst predominantly conducted in the context of strong linkages, it appears that such reciprocity as does exist is often of a generalised rather than of a more specific type, with only a minority of the exchanges that have been documented, such as the free exchange of labour, appearing to carry with them an expectation of an immediate and equivalent return.

5.10 In sum, the application of the three criteria suggest that this is a relatively uncivic society, which currently only possesses a modest supply of what Putnam would regard as social capital. But the fact that the dominant vertical relations are not exclusively ordered along patron-client lines; that forms of horizontal relations are present which are not entirely "strong" in nature; and that norms of reciprocity are quite strongly generalised; together indicate that it is not entirely of the uncivic type. These elements may in effect be taken as representing the potential for a more civic society in future. Section 6 provides the opportunity to begin to explore how far current NGO interventions in general, and more specifically those associated with CARE, can go in turning that potential into reality.

6. SOME PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS ON ACCESS TO NGO SERVICES

6.1 Whether they do so will, in the first instance, be a function of the type of strategy pursued, and particularly whether this is premised upon co-existence, collaboration or conflict with dominant communal figures. Outcomes will then need to be reviewed to see whether vertical relations have been re-enforced or horizontal ones given greater prominence, whether it is strong or weak links that have been encouraged, and whether new horizontal bonds have been created with other organisations. The current investigation has focussed on pre-existing forms of social capital and cannot delve into these matters in any depth. Some preliminary data and indications are, however, available and these are summarised, starting with the work of other NGOs, and then turning to the case of CARE itself.

6.2 Before CARE established a presence, five other NGOs were already functioning in the *para*, of which Grameen and BRAC were the most important. Grameen members were found in almost equal numbers in both parts of the *para* whilst BRAC operated only in the Hindu quarter. Members of all classes are found among the NGO membership, but in overall terms, marginal farm households were most likely to belong, followed in sequence by small farmers, middle farmers and the landless.

6.3 Among the Muslims the pattern is one of “co-existence”, with the most powerful households showing little personal interest or involvement in the activities of these other NGOs, and member households seem neither to be very closely connected to the better off, nor concentrated in any particular lineage. The households that participate most extensively are actually those from Lineage 3, which have the weakest kinship connections, and it seems that they may actually seek this form of affiliation to compensate for their relative lack of other forms of social capital.

6.4 The situation in the Hindu part of the *para* corresponds more closely to the “collaboration” type. The larger number of NGOs functioning here and the higher overall level of participation partly reflect the presence of more relatively poor households, but are also in part a reflection of efforts made by leading members to draw in external development organisations. All sectors of the Hindu population benefit, although there are considerable variations in the degree to which different parties participate, and it appears that the BRAC group is to some extent shaped by what Putnam would describe as strong relations, whereas Grameen has greater potential to become a truly civic association; but this, in itself, says nothing about the actual effectiveness of either grouping. Within these broad overall patterns, further differences between individual households may be identified, with some households emerging as far more prolific “joiners” than others.

6.5 In the case of CARE, it was found that 56 of the 77 households in the *para* belong to the GO-IF FFS. Virtually all full members are drawn from the big, medium and small farmer categories, whilst the associate or ‘buddy’ members nearly all come from the small, marginal and landless categories. Of the 28 full member households, 68% are Muslim and 32% Hindu, whilst Hindus and Christians together account for just over half of the buddy category. There is little evidence of domination by particular lineages or exclusion of others, with degrees of participation and non-participation largely reflecting relative differences in wealth. On balance, it would therefore appear that there may at least have been some promotion of the desirable “weak” relations in this instance, but it is important to note that all of these comments are based on only the most superficial examination.

6.6 Finally, a word should be said about Shabge. In the present enquiry, which focused on a community where GO-IF had been working, it was only possible to make a quick visit to one site and to reproduce only a tiny part of the basic study. This did, however, throw up one or two potentially important comparative insights. The GO-IF FFS was formally made up of men and women but effectively male dominated. Given virilocal patterns of residence, where a woman nearly always moves to her husband’s community at marriage, this meant that the new organisation brought together people who already had many other connections, and is likely to have functioned in a way that reflected this. Shabge, by contrast, works only with women and mainly with those drawn from the poorer categories of household. As such, it is apparent that pre-existing kinship links between members are far fewer and less well established, and that the potential scope for the creation of new “weak”

link structures, of the type specifically highlighted by Putnam, may therefore be much greater. This view is re-enforced by preliminary investigations carried out into the types of intra-group relations that already exist, which showed quite highly developed patterns of horizontal reciprocity, but much lower levels of other forms of interaction, and hardly any present capacity to form “bridging” relations with the world beyond the *para*. But whether CARE is able to help realise this potential, and whether it would be sensible for it to attempt to do so, can only be determined when the proposed study of the Rural Livelihoods Programme itself has been carried out.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Social capital in CARE

Social capital is a key element in the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework that has ostensibly guided GO-Interfish (GO-IF), Shabge and all of CARE Bangladesh's other natural resources activities since the late 1990s. But no explicit attempt has hitherto been made to define what it is, to consider how it might be promoted, or to determine how it may have been affected by the various interventions that have been made.

In so far as it has been addressed at all, it seems to have been thought of as something that the projects would themselves seek to create; initially through the promotion of Farmer Field Schools (FFSs); more recently, and in addition, through the engineering of a series of higher level organisations. At best, this assumes a high degree of malleability with regard to, and at worst entirely assumes away, any social capital existing prior to the interventions taking place.

Whilst perhaps creating limited difficulties for the front line staff confronting these realities in the field, this may not have mattered unduly when the creation of FFS was merely instrumental to the process of learning about new technology. But it becomes significantly more problematic with the attempt, under the rights-based regime introduced in 2001, to transform these organisations into vehicles whereby poor men and women can cohere and act collectively in pursuit of their wider interests.

1.2 The study and how it was conducted

This study aims to extend the work of the Institutional Analysis (CARE 2002) by enquiring more deeply into the forms that social capital takes and how it is accumulated and manipulated. In combination with other investigations into gender relations, the transfer of agricultural technology and household livelihoods, it will seek ultimately to provide a firmer basis for planning and assessing the effects of rights-based natural resource activities.

It is based mainly on a short investigation carried out in one *para* over a two-week period in March 2003. In the first week various forms of background information were collected by a team comprising one member of the social development team and two field trainers, one of whom had been responsible for the community in question. Following the PRA-based methods first developed in the institutional analysis (*Howes 2002*) resource and social maps were prepared, a well-being analysis was conducted, and basic genealogies prepared.

This then paved the way for a more extensive investigation in week two, when a team of Shabge, GO-IF and social development staff worked with two lead facilitators to assemble a series of individual household case studies, to explore the extra-communal connections of key leading individuals, and to look more specifically at the patterns of relationships arising within the GO-IF FFS. Towards the end of the week, a similar analysis of internal relationships was also conducted in the course of a single visit to a Shabge group in another part of the district. Further data was then collected in a series of interviews with the local FFS, and work completed with a brief literature review.

Box 1: The study and its limitations

The first week was built around an extended well-being analysis, which laid out the kin and class structures of the community and showed in outline how resources were allocated. This drew upon a tried and tested methodology, was conducted with impressive expertise, and effectively provided the bones of the study. Week two relied mainly on a series of household case studies in an attempt to put the social capital flesh upon the basic skeleton. A largely new and untested approach was devised for this purpose, and whilst partially successful, this also proved to be flawed in certain critical respects.

A set of households drawn from across the spectrum was selected and the same approach then used in each instance. Working in pairs with informants, team members were firstly asked to prepare name cards for each adult kin relation with whom household members had some interaction in the last year, and to put these together into genealogies. Whilst not entirely straightforward, this worked quite well.

The next step was to make a list of all of the different ways in which social capital might be expressed, ranging at one extreme from mutual aid in the care of children and the sick, to assistance in accessing *Upazilla* facilities at the other. A total of 29 different possibilities were identified and placed in a number of broad categories (see *Section 4 for further details*). A second set of cards, comprising the names of the heads of all households in the *para* was then prepared.

In relation to each form of social capital relevant to their own personal circumstances, informants were then asked to make a pile of cards showing the names of all the kin and all the households to whom they had either given and/or from whom they had received the type of assistance in question, additional information being recorded about exchanges with non-kin lying beyond the *para* where applicable. With all of the information collected, and drawing on the results of the earlier investigation, it was then possible to see which types of relationships arose with different categories of people, ranging from close kin, to co-lineage members, other members of the same religious group, and other residents of the same *para*.

This procedure gave rise to one comparatively minor and one rather more serious difficulty. The minor problem, which reflected a flaw in the initial briefing process and the lack of time for pre-testing, arose when team members used slightly different interpretations of the nature of some of the services under consideration. The more major and partially overlapping difficulty came about for the same reasons and derived from the complexity of some of the issues under investigation. Things like the use of hand pumps or mutual exchange of small cash loans are relatively straightforward. Pond using and labour hiring relations, or assistance in taking a case to the *shalish*, on the other hand, emerged as rather more complex phenomena, where a deeper and more qualitative form of enquiry was required in addition to the simple quantitative approach that had been designed.

Given time, additional enquiries could have been designed and administered to a sub-set of those involved for example in shallow tubewell groups or extensive hiring in of labour, but this was not appreciated until it was too late. What became apparent, in other words, was that social capital was too multi-faceted and complicated a topic to be successfully investigated in such a short period of time.

Whilst some valuable information was gathered, the study suffered from a number of limitations. These are summarised in Box 1 and naturally affect the reliability of the results obtained and any conclusions arising. It will also be apparent that the findings from what was essentially a single community study cannot necessarily be expected to represent what happens more generally and will need to be further tested before they can provide a reliable basis for action.

The remainder of the paper falls into five main parts. Section 2 looks briefly at the more general literature on social capital, introducing a series of related concepts that will inform the subsequent discussion. Section 3 provides an introduction to the study community and the key actors within it. Section 4 lays out a series of nine household case studies illustrating the different forms and permutations in which individual social capital may appear at different levels in the communal hierarchy. This, in turn, paves the way for a cross-cutting investigation in Section 5 of the types of relationship through which social capital is expressed. Section 6 then looks more specifically at how the two CARE projects and other NGO interventions have interacted with and been shaped by social capital in its various guises.

2. WHAT SOCIAL CAPITAL MEANS AND WHY IT MATTERS

Social capital first appeared as a concept in development discourse in the 1990s and has since attracted a significant amount of interest; although to some it amounts to little more than a new label attached to a subject that has long been the concern of social and political scientists. A clearly agreed definition has yet to emerge, and it has been suggested that the fluidity of the notion is actually part of its appeal, offering something to analysts from both the left and the right of the political spectrum (Harriss and DeRenzio 1997).

2.1 The views of Robert Putnam

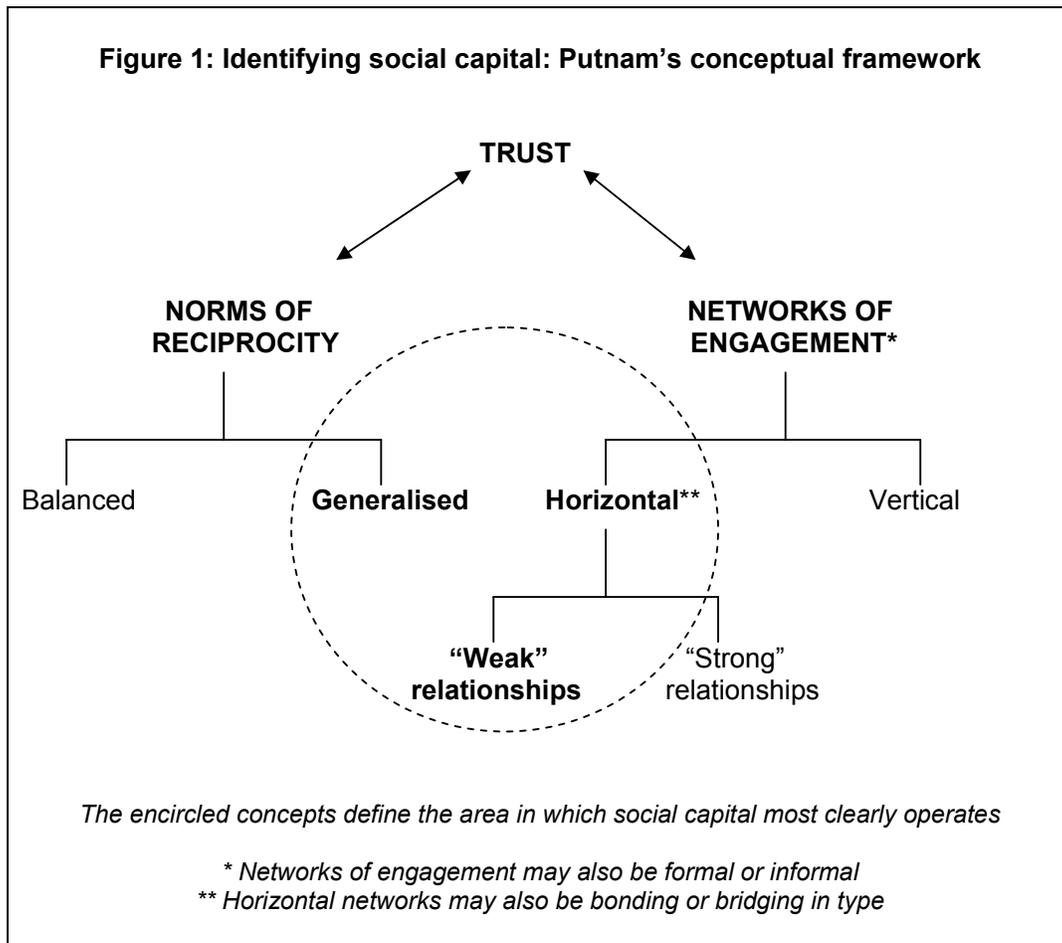
Robert Putnam has been central to the debate (Putnam *et al* 1993). Focussing on the specific issue of the role performed by civic institutions in the strengthening of democracy in modern Italy, he develops a conceptual framework which is claimed, and widely believed, to be broadly applicable to a much broader range of societies¹. Although his concept of social capital differs somewhat from those of DFID's Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (DFID 1997), from which CARE's own approach derives, it represents a far more developed working through of the relevant issues, and will therefore be adopted as the primary framework for our own discussion.

To Putnam, social capital is made up three interacting and mutually re-enforcing elements: *trust*, *norms of reciprocity* and *networks of civic engagement* (Figure 1)

Reciprocity, in turn, appears in two forms: *balanced*, referring to near simultaneous exchanges of items or services of equivalent value; and *generalised* or continuing relationships of exchange which are unrequited at a particular point in time, but carry the mutual expectation that a benefit granted now should be repaid in the future. Of

¹ Whether (or how far) a set of concepts developed in the context of a particular society or culture can legitimately be applied to another has become the subject of some controversy within the research team. Whilst trying not to be entirely uncritical, and recognising that an element of adaptation will always be required, the paper ultimately follows what may be described as a "pro-Putnam" line. But by alerting readers to the dissenting view that has been expressed, it is hoped that they will ultimately be able to form their own opinion on the matter.

the two, the generalised form is by far the more significant, and is likely to arise where there are dense networks of social exchange.



Networks, characterised by interpersonal communication and exchange, may be *formal* or *informal*. Some are primarily *horizontal* (or web-like), bringing together agents of equivalent status or power, and these sub-divide into *bonding* types that link people within communities and *bridging* links that connect individuals to the wider social universe. Others networks are primarily *vertical*, linking unequal agents in asymmetric relations of hierarchy and dependence.

Networks of civic engagement, like neighbourhood associations, clubs or co-ops, represent intense horizontal interaction and are the essential form of social capital². A vertical network, no matter how dense, and no matter how important to its participants, cannot sustain social trust and cooperation in the same way. Vertical flows of information are often less reliable than their horizontal counterpart, and

² To anticipate an argument that will begin to be explored in more depth in section 6 below, the types of primary groups and wider federal bodies typically promoted by NGOs in Bangladesh would appear to have the potential to turn into precisely such "essential forms of social capital". For organisations like CARE, which see their members as more than passive recipients of credit and development messages, the notion of networks of civic engagement as essential appears especially apposite, and the question of whether/how that potential could actually be realised of particular importance.

sanctions that support norms of reciprocity against the threat of opportunism are less likely to be invoked upwards and less likely to be acceded to if invoked.

Patron-client relations, as a type of vertical network, involve interpersonal exchange and reciprocal obligations, but the exchange is vertical and the obligations asymmetric. The vertical bonds of clientism work against horizontal group organisation, undermining potential solidarity between clients and, to a lesser extent, patrons too.

Kinship and friendship are in some respects comparable to horizontal ties of civic engagement, but these “strong” interpersonal connections are ultimately less important than their “weak” counterparts, like acquaintanceship. Self-contained kin-type groupings, with high degrees of internal interaction, may work quite well in themselves, but networks of civic engagement that cut across social cleavages are ultimately more effective in nourishing communal action and building stocks of social capital³.

The stocks of social capital found in effective *civic societies* regenerate themselves in virtuous circles, whilst the *uncivic society*, with its lack of generalised trust, is characterised by vicious circles. Both of these situations can become stable equilibria, and individuals responding rationally to the social context of the uncivic society, bequeathed to them by history, end up reinforcing structures that may ultimately be to the detriment of all. Under these circumstances, authoritarian government, coercion and exploitation provide the only alternative to anarchy.

2.2 Other perspectives

As Figure 1 indicates, Putnam defines social capital as a purely collective and unequivocally positive entity that is exclusively associated with horizontal networks and mainly characterised by generalised reciprocity and “weak”, non kin-based types of relationship. From this perspective, where vertical, kin-based and “strong” relationships predominate, little or no social capital can be said to exist.

Others, taking their cue from analysts who include Bordieu (1985) and Coleman (1988), see things in less restrictive terms. DFID (1997), for example, adopts the alternative definition of “the social resources upon which people draw in pursuit of their livelihood objectives”, and the World Bank (1996) arrives at a similar formulation. This differs from Putnam in two fundamental respects, both casting the net wider to include vertical as well as horizontal connections, and treating social

³ “Strong” kin or friendship based ties are clearly, in many ways, a very good thing and a key building block in a healthy society, providing a setting within which people can develop and form a necessary sense of self-worth and identity, offering security and mutual protection in times of hardship, and so forth. But difficulties start to arise when such bonds are allowed to influence decisions about the allocation of resources in the public sphere. To take an example that should be familiar to anybody who knows Bangladesh, people who are able to use their influence to secure government or NGO posts for their friends and relations, often do so to the exclusion of better qualified candidates, who might reasonably be expected to deliver a higher level of performance from which society as a whole would benefit. The senior Dhaka civil servant who tries to appoint staff from his own home district, and the University that only recruits lecturers from among its own graduates, represent equally harmful extensions of the same principle. Powerful political dynasties operating at the national level, of the type that have flourished throughout the sub-continent, take these tendencies to their logical extreme. In a similar fashion, “strong”, kin-based relations are frequently mobilised to protect guilty parties in legal proceedings, thereby denying justice and helping to perpetuate forms of behaviour which are again detrimental to the interests of society at large.

capital as something that may be accumulated by the individual rather than as a collective phenomenon. In so doing it also opens up the possibility that social capital, whilst still generally conceived as “a good thing”, may embody certain more negative characteristics. More specifically, in contrast to Putnam, in this perspective it is implied that vertical connections combine more and less desirable characteristics and should not be viewed in a wholly negative light.

A third school of thought is associated mainly with Douglas North (1990). This offers a still wider focus which, in addition to the largely informal horizontal and hierarchical relations included in the second model, also encompasses a range of more formalised institutional relations and structures, such as contract law, transparent governance, and civil rights codes that influence social interaction. Whilst recognising the importance of these phenomena, others analysts prefer to treat them as exogenous, in order to be able to focus more explicitly on the linkages that exist between them and a more narrowly defined concept of social capital.

2.3 Why social capital matters

Though the differences between them are significant, the three perspectives that have been outlined broadly agree as to the significance of social capital to development. In particular, they argue that it:

- reduces the transactions costs of monitoring and enforcing agreements, which in turn reduces risk and enhances the effectiveness of individual and collective endeavours
- acts as a disincentive to free-riding and provides an incentive to the adoption of sustainable practices, which is of particular significance in the rational management of natural capital
- facilitates the sharing of knowledge, that then strengthens human capital and encourages innovation
- alleviates vulnerability by helping to deal with shocks such as a death in the family and by providing safety nets in times of intense insecurity when starvation might otherwise threaten
- compensates for a shortage of physical or human capital among the poor
- makes it easier to access, utilise and benefit from external resources
- is valuable in itself: a person with many connections is likely to enjoy a sense of psychic well-being they would otherwise lack.

3. AN OVERVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY

3.1 Location and resources

Azimpara, where the research was carried out, lies a few kilometres to the east of the tarmac road that runs through the centre of Panchgram⁴, and is approached by a series of mud tracks elevated a metre or two above the surrounding fields. The community is entered by a single track from the east that continues for some 400 metres before reaching a junction from which one branch runs off to the south and another to the north.

⁴ The *para* and the union are both located in Dinajpur district, but following the precedent set in the Institutional Analysis (CARE 2002), which worked in the same area, their true names have been concealed.

The visitor first passes a small *Khatria* caste Hindu settlement that lies immediately to the south of the undivided track, before arriving at slightly larger and more prosperous cluster of Muslim houses surrounding the junction and extending a small distance away to the west. With virtually all of the higher land in this central area now occupied, a smaller cluster of Muslim homes has also been established a short distance further to the north, close to the point where the track turns once again to the west and leaves the community.

The higher land where the houses have been built and the adjoining areas are interspersed with a number of ponds. Immediately beyond is an area of medium low land that is mainly under a rotation of *t.amon* and shallow tubewell irrigated *boro*. To the north is a slightly smaller expanse of medium high land where wheat and *t.amon* are cultivated. This in turn surrounds some smaller areas of slightly higher land where fruit trees and bamboo are grown.

The *para* has a mosque, a Hindu temple, and a church that serves a small number of former Hindus who have converted to Christianity. There is also a *madrassa* in the Muslim quarter and a BRAC primary school in the Hindu area.

3.2 The Muslims

The largest owner of land lying within the area of the *para* is an absentee landlord who is an advocate, but nearly all of his tenants come from elsewhere, and his influence within the community itself is only slight. The most powerful individuals within the *para* are two Muslim brothers, Azim and Aziz who own 57 and 43 acres of land respectively⁵.

Azim, the elder of the two, and for many years the dominant force within the community, is now somewhat frail and has begun to withdraw from active engagement in *para* affairs. He is a widower, and five years ago suffered a devastating blow when his son, who had been a high ranking army officer and was being groomed for political office, was murdered in a local dispute. Azim now spends most of his time in the *Upazilla* headquarters a few miles away, where he has built a house. In his absence, Aziz has become more influential, working in conjunction with his two sons. They are already the seventh and eighth wealthiest members of the community and one, Aminul, has been selected as male leader of the CARE FFS.

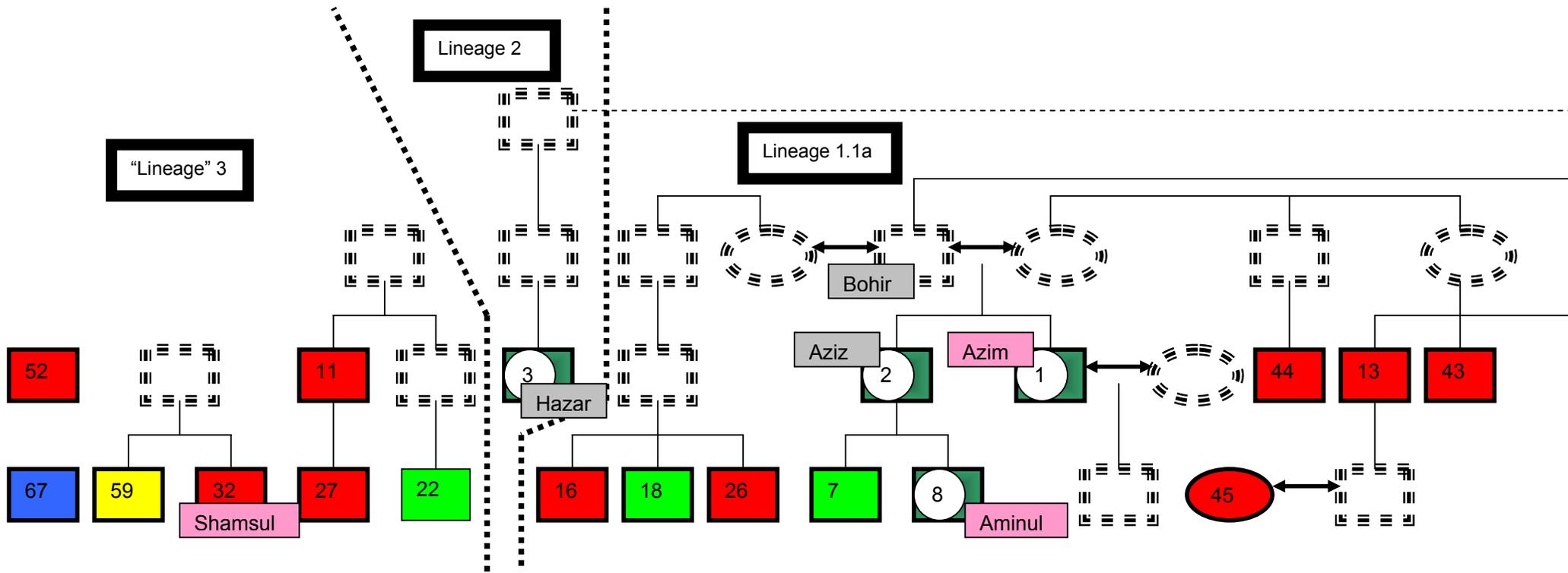
Azim and Aziz are grandsons of Piru, who first settled the area that has now become Azimpara with his young family some fifty years ago. Piru began the dominant lineage we have identified as Lineage 1 and which has now subdivided into three sections: 1.1a, 1.1b and 1.2 (*Figure 3*).

Life in the early years was hazardous with threats both from roaming criminals and wild animals, and Piru sought to build up the community as rapidly as he could so that it would be large enough to protect itself and would have sufficient hands to develop and work the available land. Bohir, the older and stronger of his two sons, became the pivotal factor in this plan.

Bohir had two wives, the first of whom was the mother of Azim and Aziz, and the second of whom had no children herself. As a part of Piru's expansion plan, both wives were encouraged, through the allocation of relatively modest areas of land, to

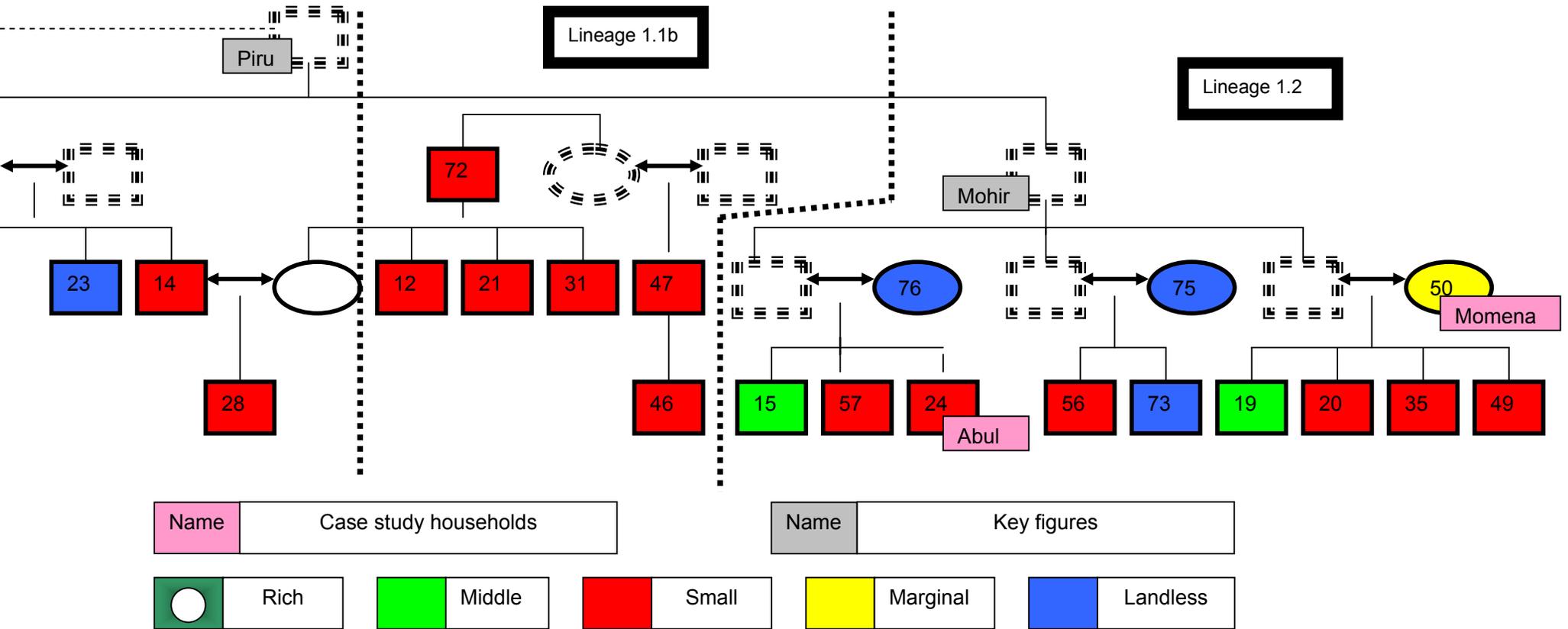
⁵ These holdings both exceed the legal land ceiling of 33.3 acres imposed in 1972, but this is easily and widely circumvented (CARE 2003).

Figure 2: Muslim genealogy and social class



(Numbers show wealth ranking scores)





bring some of their own siblings, together with their spouses, to the community and to start families of their own. Together with Bohir's direct descendants, the descendants of this group now comprise what we have referred to as Lineage 1.1a, which has a total of 14 households. The first wife's sister and her husband, in turn, had a son who married a member of what we have referred to as Lineage 1.1b, the origins of which are themselves unclear, thus linking the two sub-lineages. Sub-Lineage 1.1b accounts for a further six households.

Piru's second son, Mohir, the younger and less influential sibling of Bohir, had three sons, all of whose wives still survive and have their own households. Between them they produced nine sons who remain in the community. Most are small landowners, and one has become landless. Altogether this sub-lineage, which we have called 1.2, now comprises 12 households, but their relatively lowly economic status means they are not very significant in *para* affairs.

When Piru first came to the area, he was accompanied by a distant cousin, who started Lineage 2. The cousin had one son who survived to adulthood, and the son himself had one son, Hazar, who is today the only other major landowner in the community, with a holding of 22 acres.

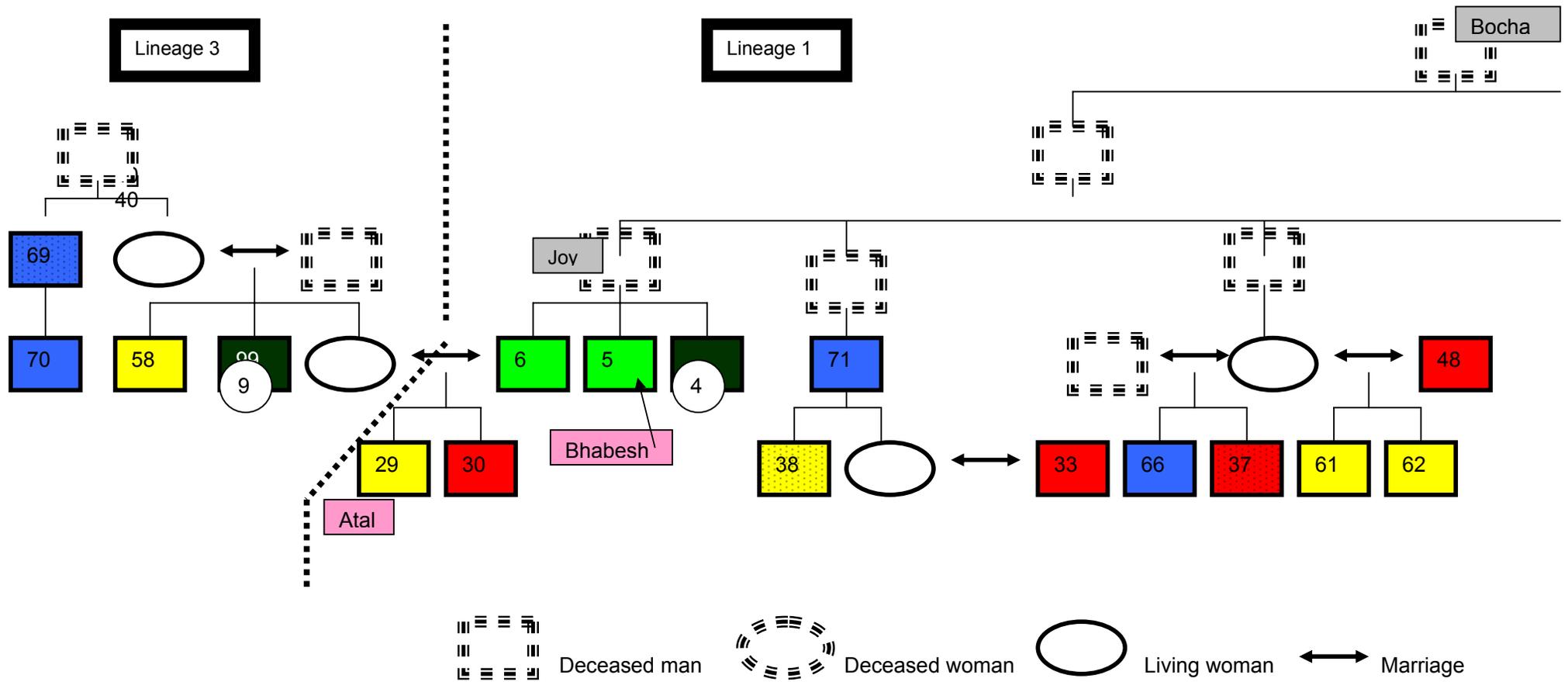
The picture on the Muslim side is completed by what we have called "Lineage 3", which, in reality, is a grouping of six households comprising two sets of brothers and two unconnected households. All are descended from individuals who attached themselves to the community some time after it was founded. Their more recent arrival is reflected in their lower economic status. The group contains no large farmers and ranges from medium through to landless households.

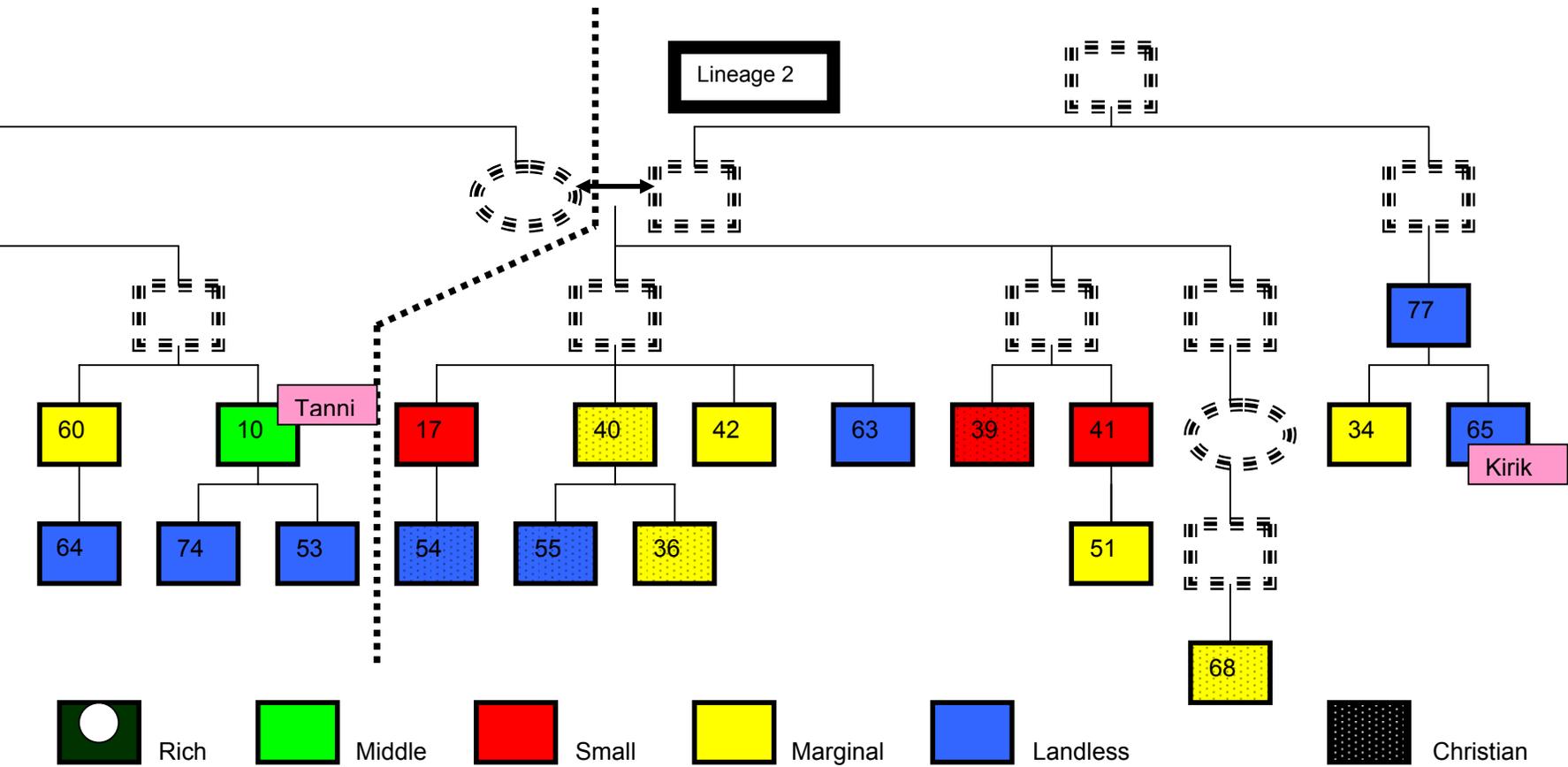
3.3 The Hindus

We were able to find out less about the history of the Hindus in the community. Their genealogy (*Figure 4*) suggests, however, that they have actually been resident in the area for longer, since in their case five or six generations separate the present household heads from the first residents, compared to a maximum gap of four with the Muslims. Despite this, the present structure of kinship relations is somewhat simpler, with three lineages connected by single marriage ties, and no apparent instances of wives' siblings being "imported" in the manner described above in relation to the first Muslim lineage. If this option were ever to have been considered, it would probably have been rendered infeasible by the relative lack of land resources that could be offered by way of incentive, since it appears that at the outset, no individual household could have controlled more than 10-15 acres.

Lineage 1, which was founded by an individual named Bocha, dominates the Hindu community and currently comprises 18 households spread across two generations. Bocha had one son, Joy Chandra, who survived to adulthood and had four sons of his own. The eldest appears to have inherited or otherwise have acquired by far the greatest portion of the lineage's land, and this has now been divided between his three sons, one of whom is a large farmer and two of whom are medium farmers. One of the latter, Bhabesh, has assumed the role of leadership within the Hindu community, and his wife became the woman leader under the CARE FFS. The descendants of Joy's other three sons comprise one middle farmer, three small farmers, four marginal households and five landless households. They include among their number two of the households that have converted to Christianity.

Figure 3: Hindu genealogy and social class





Lineage 2 appears to have been established at about the same time as Lineage 1 by an individual whose name could not be recalled, and accounts for a further 14 households, who range in status from small farmers to landless. A link with Lineage 1 was established at an early stage, when a son married Bocha's daughter. This lineage contains the five remaining households that have converted to Christianity.

Lineage 3, which traces its ancestry in the community back only two generations, comprises four households, one of whom falls into the large farmer class and three of whom are marginal or landless. A linkage with the wealthiest and most powerful subsection of Lineage 1 was established quite recently through the marriage of a sister of the wealthiest individual in Lineage 3.

3.4 Class, lineage and religious group

Tables 1 and 2 provide a breakdown of the households in the *para* by ethnic group, lineage and class. There are total of 77 households of which slightly more than half are Muslim, slightly more than a third Hindu and 12% Christian. The Muslims are predominantly small farmers, operating between 0.5 and 2.5 acres; but there are also substantial big and medium farmer minorities, operating more than 7.5 acres and from 2.5 – 7.5 acres respectively, and smaller numbers of marginal and landless households, with 0.05 – 0.5 and less than 0.05 acres respectively⁶. The Hindus as a whole are much poorer, with a clear majority of marginal and landless and far fewer small households, but only a slightly lower proportion of big and medium farm households. The small group of Christians is concentrated exclusively in the poorest three categories. Table 2 shows the clear tendency for wealth to concentrate in certain lineages among the Muslims, whilst among the Hindus and Christians, with their generally lower holdings, resources are rather more evenly distributed.

Table 1: Land owned by religious group and class (acres)

Class	Muslim	Hindu/ Christian	Total
Large	124.5	9.5	134.0
Medium ⁷	6.9	6.5	13.4
Small	16.1	0.9	17.0
Marginal	0.1	0.7	0.8
Landless	3.6	0.6	4.2
Total	151.2	18.2	169.4

⁶ These are the categories used by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). It is important to recognise that they do not refer to area of land owned. A household with little owned land, but with 3 acres in tenancy, for example, would be classified as a middle farmer in exactly the same way as a household that owned and farmed 3 acres of its own. To compensate for the possibility of such anomalies, we asked people from the *para* to wealth rank all households using their own criteria. The results are shown as a part of figures 3 and 4 where they can be directly compared with the BBS classification.

⁷ This figure appears very small. The explanation again lies in the fact that the categories are defined in terms of the area operated, not the area owned (see the head of table 2.1 for further details). In this community, unlike others studied, a relatively very large area of land is given in sharecrop. This enables many households who would otherwise be "small", "marginal" or even "landless" to join the "medium" category.

Table 2: Households by class, religious group and lineage*2.1 Number of Households by class and religious group*

Category Acres operated	Big >7.5	Middle 2.5 - 7.5	Small 0.5 - 2.49	Marginal 0.05- 0.5	Landless <0.05	Total	%
Muslim	4	5	25	2	5	41	53
Hindu	2	3	5	8	9	27	35
Christian			2	4	3	9	12
Total	6	8	32	14	17	77	100

2.2 % of Households by class and religious group

Muslim	10	12	61	5	12	100
Hindu	7	11	19	30	33	100
Christian			22	44	33	100
Total	8	10	42	18	22	100

2.3 Number of Households by Class and lineage

Muslim	1.1a	3	2	9		1	15
	1.1b			5			5
	1.2		2	7	1	3	13
	2	1					1
	3		1	4	1	1	7
Hindu	1	1	3	3	4	5	16
	2			2	3	3	8
	3	1			1	1	3
Christian	1		1	1			2
	2			1	3	2	6
	3					1	1
Total		6	8	32	14	17	77

2.4 % of Households by Class and Lineage

Muslim	1.1a	20	13	60		7	100
	1.1b			100			100
	1.2		15	54	8	23	100
	2	100					100
	3		14	57	14	14	100
Hindu	1	6	19	19	25	31	100
	2			25	38	38	100
	3	33			33	33	100
Christian	1			50	50		100
	2			17	50	33	100
	3					100	100
Total		8	10	42	18	22	100

In conclusion, the tables and the earlier account provide the first opportunity to start adapting and applying some of the concepts introduced in section 2. In particular, they help to form a more nuanced and culturally specific view of the critical distinction between strong (primarily kin-based) and weak (acquaintance-based) relationships. These emerge not so much as mutually exclusive and opposed categories, but as poles to a continuum that begins with the immediate nuclear family, which provides the strongest types of relationship, and then continues through the progressively weaker categories of siblings, the wider lineage and the religion-based group, before arriving ultimately at members of other religions and communities⁸.

We shall subsequently see how considerations of location, which broadly equate to Putnam's distinction between bonding (intra-communal) and bridging (extra-communal) linkages, also enter into play here, and to some extent cross-cut the first continuum.

4. SOCIAL CAPITAL: HOUSEHOLD CASE STUDIES

Taking DFID's broad and individually focussed definition of "the social resources upon which people draw in pursuit of their livelihood objectives" as the point of departure, but also keeping Putnam's conceptual framework in mind, social capital in our study was explored primarily through the medium of nine household case studies. Five of these households were Muslim and four Hindu, and the overall selection was drawn so as to cover the spectrum from the wealthiest families at one extreme to some of the poorest at the other. An attempt was also made to cover as many lineages and sub-lineages as possible (see *Figures 3 and 4*). These individual stories appear below, and provide a foundation for the more thematic analysis that follows in Section 5.

Individual circumstances vary and it will not possible to structure all of the accounts in exactly the same way. But as far as possible, an attempt will be made in each instance to address the following issues:

- how the household fits into the broader framework of kinship and the degree to which this potentially enables it to draw on "strong" kin-based relations;
- the extent to which the household actually contracts horizontal and reciprocal linkages;
- whether these are primarily balanced or generalised in nature, and the degree to which they are conducted within the circle of strong kin-based relationships or extend beyond it;
- the extent and nature of any vertical (asymmetric) linkages;
- the degree to which these, in turn, are conducted within or beyond the circle of strong kin-based and wider semi-strong relations;
- whether the vertical linkages tend to be more of the single-, or of the multi-stranded, patron-client type;

⁸ An already complicated analysis would become more difficult still if consistent attempts were made to observe all of these gradations, the precise boundaries between which are, in any case, often almost impossible to identify. For simplicity's sake, all relations arising within the lineages and sub-lineages identified in figures 3 and 4 will be taken as "strong", those with other members of the same religious group and *para* as "semi-strong", those with members of other religions from the same *para* as "semi-weak", and those with non-kin from beyond the *para* as "weak". All of these categories are clearly, to some degree, over-simplifications and it will be necessary in the text to make some attempts to discriminate more finely within the "strong" category in particular. The fullest application of the categories is found in sub-section 5.4 below, especially in Table 3.

- the degree to which the household is able to secure weak, bridging type connections that extend beyond the *para*;
- the implications of such connections for the structuring of intra-*para* relations.

4.1 Aziz: A Muslim landlord and *para* leader

4.1.1 Lineage and family

We begin with Aziz, a Muslim in his mid-50s, who has already partially been introduced in the overview of the community in the previous section.

To re-cap, he is the grandson of Piru, who was the driving force behind the original Muslim settlement in the area, and the son of Bohir, whose two marriages provided the basis for drawing several other households into the community. This established what we have called Lineage 1.1a, an extensive network of what Putnam would refer to as “strong” relationships, at the centre of *para* affairs. After his elder brother, Azim, we have also seen that Aziz is the second largest land-owner. In recent years, he has increasingly assumed a position of leadership, as Azim has aged and begun to withdraw from day to day engagement in communal affairs. His household falls within Lineage 1.1a sitting at the centre of an extensive network of what Putnam would describe as “strong” kin-based links

Aziz lives with his wife in an imposing two-story brick house at the heart of the Muslim quarter. They have four sons, all of whom have received a good education. One is a college lecturer, one a school teacher, one is at university, and one is at college. The eldest, Ahammed, and the second eldest, Aminul, (*Case 2 below*) have married and established their own households in the same *bari*, and each has already been given some land of their own to farm. Aziz also has three daughters. Two have married and moved away from the *para*, whilst the youngest remains within the household.

A powerful household such as this has comparatively little need for the bonding networks of mutually supportive reciprocal relations sometimes characteristic of those in more vulnerable positions at lower levels in the economic hierarchy. Aziz does, however, exchange interest-free loans with his brother and with one of his cousins, as well as with Bhabesh, the leading Hindu (*Case 6 below*). In addition, he consults two cousins about marriages, and engages in limited exchanges of agricultural materials among a small circle of close relations.

4.1.2 Assets and economic relationships

As a younger man during the Pakistan period, when his father was still alive, Aziz made a lot of money with his brother in the cloth business, part of which was used to acquire land. With his subsequent inheritance, he now owns a total of 43 acres, and concentrates more on agriculture. He leases out the greater part of his holding, comprising 33 acres, and directly manages the remainder himself. The vertical relationships arising from the ownership of these assets form the dominant motif in the households’ wider pattern of social capital, and the foundation upon which many of its other significant linkages are built.

The share-cropped land is worked by 20 households, some of whom are drawn from within the circle of “strong” relationships, but many of whom enjoy “weaker” linkages to Aziz. In all, six come from his own lineage, six from other Muslim households from the *para*, five from Hindu households, and a further three from outside. He gives agricultural advice to all of his sharecroppers, plus an unrelated Muslim and one of

the three rich Hindu farmers. Anyone is allowed to collect straw and other waste and gleanings from any of his fields.

Aziz hires one permanent labourer, who is a Hindu and also one of his sharecroppers. For the cultivation of the 10 acres, he relies upon temporary labour drawn from 32 local households, and these again cover a spectrum from the very strongly to the much more weakly related. In this instance, 18 are Hindus and 14 Muslims. 11 of the Hindus come from inside the *para* and seven from outside. Of the Muslims, only three are from within the lineage, whilst five more are drawn from elsewhere in the *para* and six come from outside. His son, Aminul, takes the main responsibility for contracting labour on Aziz' behalf.

In addition to the permanent Hindu labourer, three other Hindu and two Muslim households, one of which is a member of the same lineage, have multi-stranded patron-client type relations with Aziz, where share-cropping is combined with labouring. The Hindus comprise two pairs of brothers, which suggests that they may have inherited a close relation with Aziz through their fathers. In times of natural disaster, Aziz appears not to recognise any general responsibility to provide support for those who work for him directly or sharecrop his land. In the most recent floods occurring three years ago, he is, however, reported to have assisted four poorer Hindus, from households outside the leading lineage, two of whom provided labour for him and two of whom did not. Whilst a degree of patronage is therefore evident here, this only features in quite a small minority of the totality of relationships in which Aziz engages and, even where present, does not tend to involve very extensive obligations.

Much of Aziz's land is irrigated, and he personally owns three of the thirteen shallow tubewells (STWs) in the *para*, which is more than anyone else. He has also helped Aminul to acquire his own STW, and exchanges irrigation water with his son, on a reciprocal basis, on different areas of land. Whilst it is likely that Aziz' STWs are used mainly to irrigate his own self-managed and tenant-operated land, it seems likely that some water is also sold to other users. But there was insufficient time to enquire into the extent or precise nature of any such arrangements.

In addition to his agricultural land, Aziz owns the second largest pond in the *para*, which he lets other people use in different ways. His two sons and their immediate families, from the same *bari*, are allowed to fish and to bathe. The *para* children can swim and bathe, and both Muslim and Hindu adults can also use the pond to wash vegetables and to bathe if their hand pumps dry up, but animal bathing is not permitted.

Finally, Aziz owns a number of cattle. These are tended by members of five Muslim and three Hindu households, all of whom are drawn from the poorer classes. They receive the second and every subsequent alternate calf born in return for their work.

4.1.3 Community role and external relations

His powerful economic position enables Aziz to play an important part in *para* and wider institutions. Together with Bhabesh, the leading Hindu, he is now the dominant figure on the *para shalish*, and also sits on the village *shalish* for the consideration of certain cases. His family established the *para* mosque and he therefore sits on that committee as well; which among other things involves overseeing the donation of meat and money at Eid to poor Muslims from within the *para* and in one adjoining community. The family also provided the land for the *madrassa*, which was established to serve the children of the *para* and four other local communities, and

Aziz would, in the past, make donations towards the teacher's salary for the *madrassa*. But this has stopped operating, for the time being at least, following the government's failure to implement an undertaking to cover part of the running costs.

Although he was somewhat guarded in our conversations on the topic, it is also clear that Aziz's wealth has enabled him to establish contacts and exert influence well beyond the immediate community. In all, he counts some 30 leading local figures among his acquaintances, and together these comprise a major store of Putnam's critical "weak" relationships, as well as representing important "bridging" links.

Within the village, they include the dominant leader known colloquially as "the miser"; a number of Hindu and Muslim present and former Union Parishad (UP) members; and a number of school teachers who play an important part in *shalish* and other institutions. Like other family members, Aziz is a member of the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) and also enjoys good connections at the wider Union level. He is closely linked both to the UP Chairman, and to the traditionally dominant rival faction headed by the Member of Parliament (MP). In addition, he enjoys good relations with a former chairman and several other leading individuals from an adjoining union. Finally, he knows a lawyer from Dinajpur whose services can be called upon when required.

These various external linkages enable Aziz to access key resources for distribution within the *para*. In particular, he has a role in the distribution of VGD and VGF cards, entitling access to free food rations. Some of these are allocated to small farm households from his own lineage that are not properly entitled to them, a clear example of the kind of abuse that can arise where "strong" relationships figure prominently in the social landscape. Others are allocated among the wider Muslim community to poorer people. Some of these are linked to Aziz as labourers, in effect becoming a dimension of a patron-client relationship. Others still are channelled, in the fashion for which the system was actually designed, to recipients who are too old to work and support themselves. In addition to the cards, it is reported that Aziz has, in the past, also been able to secure opportunities for *para* members on government projects offering "Food For Work", but there have been no recent examples of this.

4.2 Aminul: the landlord's son and CARE representative

4.2.1 The immediate family and its significance

Aminul is the second eldest son of Aziz (*Case 1*). He is in his late 20's and is married with one small daughter. His wife works as the teacher in the BRAC school, located in the Hindu part of the *para*. The family live in their own double storey brick built house to one side of Aziz' *bari*. With assistance from his father and uncle Azim, Aminul has already secured a semi-independent economic base and is now being groomed for a role of leadership. He has already taken on responsibility for dealing with NGOs on behalf of the Muslim households, serving as the CARE community contact and dealing with the handful of other smaller organisations that have established a more limited presence in the *para*. He has also become a BNP worker, and has begun to build his own bridging relationships with the *Upazilla*, occasionally interceding on behalf of *para* members in land registration and other matters. This external role will almost certainly become more prominent in the years to come, but for the present, most of Aminul's key relations are still confined to the *para* and the immediately surrounding area.

These internal relations stem from his extensive strong immediate family connections, and in particular from the access to land which these have conferred.

Aminul has already received 2.5 acres from Aziz, and sharecrops an additional 5 acres for his father and his uncle, giving him a substantial overall holding that already places him at the margin of the large farmer class. His father has also helped him to acquire a STW, and Aminul has purchased another jointly with one of his cousins. He is able to use water from one of Aziz's own wells to irrigate other parts of his land. In addition, as we have already seen, Aminul has access to fish from his father's pond. Over and above the access to these assets provided by his immediate family, Aminul's agricultural operations benefit from the other inputs they from time to time provide, together with the technical and business advice and contacts they can offer.

The wider immediate family circle of strong relationships in the *bari*, which includes his mother, his elder brother and his wife, and his unmarried siblings, engages in an extensive form of generalised reciprocity. Members can be relied upon for support in child care and nursing in times of sickness as well as providing a source of small cash loans, small commodity exchanges, or assistance if natural disaster strikes. Similar relations, operating at a somewhat lower level of intensity, are enjoyed with a handful of both Aminul's own and his wife's kin who live in nearby communities.

4.2.2 Relations in the wider community

Beyond the *bari* and immediate family, Aminul, like his father, enjoys an extensive network of comparatively weaker relations. This covers more than 60 households, nearly all of whom live within the *para*. The majority are Muslims, but there are also a significant number of Hindus, and religious identity by itself seems neither to guarantee nor preclude the formation of any particular type of link.

Irrigation is provided to five Muslim households whose land adjoins the plots where the STWs are located. Labour is hired from 24 households, half of whom are Muslim and half Hindu. Many are allowed use of crop wastes from Aminul's fields, but access is extended to some non-labourers as well.

Among the wider group, with whom he has no direct asymmetric economic relations, Aminul has helped a few Muslims and one or two Hindus to become members of the CARE FFS, and often exchanges agricultural advice among this group and the membership more generally. In certain instances, this relationship may extend to the giving, and less frequently the receiving, of seed and other more minor agricultural inputs. In the wider sphere of reciprocity and social support there are various households with whom Aminul might interact in relation to nursing, interest-free loans, building and repairing houses, help in marriage and other ceremonies, advice regarding *shalish*, and recovery in the aftermath of natural disasters.

In general, Aminul seems to contract different types of relationships with different households and thus to enjoy a high number of comparatively low intensity, single or double linkages. There are only three households beyond the immediate family circle with whom significant multi-stranded patron-client relations have been formed. Two of these are with a father and son, and each relationship appears to a degree to have been "inherited" by Aminul from his father, for whom the parties concerned either labour or sharecrop.

4.3 Abul Kalam: A small Muslim landowner and large farmer client

4.3.1 Immediate family

Abul is a Muslim, aged about 40, and a full GO-If member. He is married with young children. He is a great grandson of Piru, the founder of the Muslim settlement, and is

distantly related to the most powerful households though their respective grandfathers, who were brothers. His household forms part of Lineage 1.2.

Abul's mother is still alive, and he has one brother and one half-brother in the *para*, together with six cousins from his father's two brothers. He shares a *bari* with his brother and mother, and his cousins and aunts all live very close by in a group of small *bari* clustered around the homes of Azim and Aziz.

His closest links are with his mother and his brother, and broadly replicate the pattern of strong relations with generalised reciprocity exhibited by the previous case. Together they exchange agricultural materials and advice, help and advice with *shalish*, plus small loans and consumption items. Other links with immediate kin are not very strong, and his wife has no relations of her own within the *para*, but two brothers and a sister from her birth *para* exchange small loans and help with access to services at the *Upazilla*.

4.3.2 Assets and wider linkages

Abul is a small farmer with 0.75 acres of his own land. He shares in a further 0.75 acres from Ahmed Ali, the son of Aziz (*Case 1*) and the brother of Aminul, the CARE representative (*Case 2*). His link to Ahmed is especially important and is clearly of the patron-client type, with Ahmed employing Abul as his STW operator, supplying his irrigation, and offering agricultural advice; as well as helping with nursing, the provision of small consumable items and interest-free loans, and contacts at the *Upazilla*. Abul's mother has a similar relationship with Azim, Ahmed's uncle, who provided land for her husband to sharecrop when he was still alive and has helped her to obtain a VGD card.

In the wider community, Abul enjoys only limited and mainly reciprocal relations of various kinds with 6 other Muslim households, as well as single-stranded relations with 5 Hindu households, and other weak linkages of a similar nature beyond the *para*.

4.4 Momena Bewa: A poor Muslim widow from a powerful lineage

Momena is a widowed Muslim aged about 50. Her husband was descended from Piru, the founder of the community, but belonged to the less influential branch of the lineage (1.2). The family *bari* is at the core of the *para*, where the original inhabitants must have settled, and immediately adjoins those of the wealthiest households. She is a GO-IF buddy, but does not belong to any other NGOs

Momena retains ownership of the 0.12 acres of land on which her house is built, and lives with her remaining unmarried son. Her two other sons, one of whom is a medium farmer and the other of whom is a small farmer, live with their families in the same *bari*. She has one married daughter who has moved away from the *para*. Momena was a second wife and has two step-sons who live elsewhere in the *para*. She also interacts with the surviving wives of her husband's brothers, and their sons and families, all of whom live nearby.

Her closest relationships are with her sons and stepsons. She often looks after their children, and the family group provides mutual help with house building and other types of work, as well looking after each other in times of sickness and exchanging small household items. She uses her son's hand pump. She enjoys similar, but less intense relations with her nephews and their families. Her case is therefore another example of strong relations combined with generalised reciprocity.

Momena's sons labour for the three wealthiest Muslim families in the neighbouring *bari*, and Momena also enjoys quite close relations with each of these households. Hazar gives her small loans, whilst both Azim and Aziz allow her household members to catch fish from their ponds. All three can be relied upon to provide some help in natural disasters and other major crises. In return she carries out small domestic tasks, and sometimes looks after the grandchildren.

The picture of her social capital is completed by a handful of more marginal weaker relationships with other Muslim and Hindu households, whom she helps with child-care, with whom she exchanges small items, and from whom she receives various minor types of assistance. She has hardly any significant contacts beyond the *para*.

4.5 Shamsul Alam: a labourer and tenant with few kin

Shamsul is a Muslim of about 40. He is married with two small sons, and his household lies within "Lineage" 3. This places him at the other end of the spectrum from Aziz and Aminul, with a paucity of strong relations on which to draw. Apart from one brother, who lives some distance away in another part of the *para*, he has no kin in the community. Whilst this could not be confirmed, it appears likely that his father only settled here when he was a young man, probably being encouraged to come in as a sharecropper by the powerful households.

Shamsul owns no land, but currently shares in 1.25 acres from Aziz and Azim, and lives on the edge of a bamboo plot owned by Hazar, the third richest person in the *para*. Shamsul's brother is also a sharecropper with few resources of his own, and beyond helping each other with childcare, the pair provide each other with little support. With his wife having no kin of her own in the community, and with only one or two relations elsewhere with whom they maintain much contact, the household has come to rely much more heavily than is normal upon "weaker" extra-family links.

The primary contact is with Hazar, upon whom they depend, in patron-client fashion, for access to a pond for fishing, irrigation, the supply of agricultural materials, small commodities, small loans, drinking water, occasional health care and help in natural disasters. They enjoy similar but less extensive links with Azim and Aziz. They also maintain a series of mainly single stranded weak relationships with 15 other Muslim and 10 Hindu households, mainly covering childcare, small loans, irrigation water, labouring and mutual assistance with marriages. Finally, again perhaps reflecting their lack of kinship ties, Shamsul's household has proved keen to seize opportunities offered by NGOs, joining two others in addition to being buddy CARE members.

4.6 Bhabesh: building a leadership position among the Hindus from a modest economic base

4.6.1 Family and resources

Bhabesh is the great-grandson of the original settler of the Hindu part of the *para*, and the brother of one of the two richest Hindus. As such, he enjoys a somewhat more modest version of the extended strong kinship network found among the leading Muslims that was described earlier, although the resources they control are on a far more limited scale. (*Further details of his ancestry and extended family appear in section 3.3 above*). Bhabesh possesses slightly less than his brothers, but by virtue of his family position and personality has emerged as the leader of the Hindu group, exerting disproportionate power and influence for a person of his relatively limited means.

He lives with his wife and children in quite a large compound that adjoins his brothers' homes, and lies some distance back from the road behind the houses of some of the poorer members of his lineage. Although this aspect of his affairs was not investigated in as much detail as most of the other cases discussed, it is evident that the group of brothers forms a cohesive and mutually supportive unit, exchanging small loans, agricultural materials and advice, and assistance in times of distress in another example of generalised reciprocity. But again replicating a pattern noted earlier among the leading Muslims, such relationships are not exclusively conducted within this inner circle, sometimes extending to the wider lineage, to other Hindus and even to one or two Muslim households.

Bhabesh has inherited 4.5 acres of land and shares in an additional 1.25 from two moderately well off Muslims who are not closely related to the most powerful households. He is therefore a middle farmer under the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) classification. Most of his holding is irrigated with his own STW. His other assets include a small pond that he owns individually, and a share in the largest pond in the *para*, which he has inherited jointly with six of his close relations, and which is leased out to a single individual for fish culture (*Section 5.2.3 below*).

4.6.2 Relations in the wider community

Bhabesh directly manages all of his own land, hiring labourers from 26 different households within the community, and as with Aziz and Aminul there are a combination of strong, patron-client and more purely contractual single-stranded relationships. Nine of the labourers, in fact, come from the poorer branches of his own lineage, 11 from other Hindu households, and six from the Muslims. Most are themselves small land holders or tenants, and only six - three of whom are from the lineage and three of whom come from other Hindu families - have any other reported relationship with Bhabesh.

Whilst these land-based relations are not insignificant to Bhabesh's overall position within the community, other factors have also made an important contribution. His descent from the "founding father", and in particular the lead taken by his immediate family in establishing the temple, are of central importance. In this case, however, the role of religious leadership does not appear to convey the same sort of obligation of charitable giving found on the Muslim side of the community, but this may, at least in part, be a function of the far more modest resources available. Together with his brother and the head of the other comparatively wealthy Hindu household, Bhabesh also plays a leading part, alongside the prominent Muslim representatives, in the deliberations of the *para shalish*, as well as representing the *para* on the village bench.

Another dimension of his role that has assumed increasing importance of late is as the key contact for NGOs wishing to establish a presence in the Hindu part of the *para*; of which, as we shall see later, there are several. His part in bringing BRAC to the community is seen as being especially significant, and is said to have contributed to a substantial improvement in the livelihoods of many of the poorer households over the past one to two years. It is Bhabesh's wife who has been selected as the woman community contact for CARE.

4.6.3 External contacts and influence

Alongside the successful links forged with NGOs, Bhabesh has been able to establish further bridging connections with a range of key individuals in the

surrounding area. Within the village, he maintains good relations with all present and past Ward Union Council representatives, who comprise the core of the *shalish*, although he steers clear of the “miser” (*Section 4.1.3 above*) who has a particularly bad reputation among the Hindu population. It is one of these “weak” contacts that has proved particularly helpful in accessing NGO resources.

In the wider forum of the union, his membership of the Awami League earlier provided an entrée to the party Union Committee, with its central influence on the distribution of official resources at local level, but the defeat of the party at the last national election means that the value of these contacts is now much reduced. His continuing relationship with the UP Chairman and other members, however, means that he still maintains a degree of influence.

One of his key achievements, which flows directly from this connection, has been to secure a *Tara* drinking water pump. This has been sunk outside his own *bari*, and is used by most of the other households in Hindu Lineage 1, proving especially valuable at times of the year when the water table lowers and some of the shallower standard hand pumps can start to dry up.

Another key area where it has been possible for Bhabesh to exert influence has been in the allocation of VGD and VGF cards. A Union level committee first allocates these to individual wards and representatives then divides them between individual *para*. Bhabesh has the role of drawing up a list of names for the *para*, and a total of 11 have been secured by him in the most recent period. Five of these have gone to poorer and older Hindus from other lineages, with the remainder being divided between two rather better off members of Bhabesh’s own lineage and three Muslims from the small farmer category. This crossing over the religious divide is somewhat surprising in the light of the fact, already mentioned above, that Aziz enjoys his own independent access to this resource that he then uses on behalf of the Muslim part of the community. But, in overall terms, the pattern is not dissimilar to that noted earlier with Aziz.

Finally, Bhabesh has been able to use his local contacts to assist with legal issues arising around the registration of land, and was earlier able to secure government (*khas*) land for two formerly landless community members in a nearby area.

4.7 Tanni Chandra Roy: a small landowner and tenant

4.7.1 The inner family circle

Tanni is a Hindu in his 50s, and a full member of the GO-IF group. His wife, who is a little younger, belongs to BRAC. Descended from the leading founder of the Hindu settlement, he belongs to the first and most powerful lineage, and benefits from an extensive network of strong kin relations, with Bhabesh and the other dominant Hindu household heads being among his cousins. He is also the *para* doctor and has some small business interests.

He has four sons and three daughters. Three of the sons have married and have children of their own. Two have built homes on Tanni’s land in the same *bari*, and one married and one unmarried son remain in the parental household. The *bari* is next door to that of Tanni’s brother and his son and also adjoins the homes of the most powerful households. All of Tanni’s daughters have married and moved away from the *para*.

He owns 0.5 acres, of which 0.2 acres is shared out, and shares in a further 2.5 acres, most of which is owned by Azim, the wealthiest Muslim. He therefore falls at the lower end of the middle farmer class. In addition to his land, he also owns a small pond.

His closest relations are with his three married sons, with one of the nephews from the adjoining *bari*, and with each of their respective wives. As the senior partner, Tanni gives more than he receives, providing the others with access to the pond for fishing and washing, to his hand pump, and to crop wastes from his fields. The group as a whole engages in the reciprocal exchange of small consumption items and regularly exchanges labour, but Tanni will sometimes pay the others for their work. Together with his wife, he helps to look after the small children and can rely on other family members to come to his assistance in times of illness. Taken as a whole, these relations represent a slightly modified version of the strong links with generalised reciprocity found in many of the other cases that have been discussed.

4.7.2 Wider relations

Tanni has a network of wider and weaker relations extending to 27 other Hindu and 6 Muslim households within the community, virtually all of which revolve around the exchange of small commodities or of labour. There is also one Muslim money lender from whom he borrows from time to time.

Links beyond the community are much more limited. One of his daughters provides occasional assistance in times of sickness, and he tries to aid her and her husband in their dealings with the *Upazilla* or NGOs. Tanni's wife has no kin in the *para*, but exchanges interest-free loans with two of her brothers from her home community and again helps with nursing when required.

4.8 Atal Chandra: a small farmer and labourer

Atal is aged about 30, and is a member of the first and most powerful Hindu lineage. He is married with 2 small children. He is a full GO-IF member and his wife belongs to BRAC. Atal owns and farms 0.25 acres, but does not sharecrop.

He is the son of Satish, a middle farmer, and the nephew of Bhabesh, the most influential Hindu (*Case 6*), and of Debesh, the wealthiest Hindu. His mother also comes from the *para* and is the sister of Khirod, a big farmer who lives almost next door and Anil, who lives a little further away. As with the other Hindus that have been considered, he again therefore enjoys an extensive network of strong kin-based relationships.

He shares a *bari* with his father and his married brother, who together provide the core of his strong kin relations. His father helps with loans, provides irrigation from his STW and drinking water from his hand pump, and allows Atal to use his pond. In return, he provides labour when required and helps with the loan of small household items. With his brother, Atal exchanges small loans, household items and labour. Links to his better off relations, whose resources remain quite limited, are not very close, but they can be relied upon to help if any Atal is involved in any disputes considered by the *shalish*.

The other important set of relationships are with a number of the most powerful Muslim households, for whom Atal frequently works as a labourer, but none of these are of the patron-client type. Beyond this, he exchanges interest-free loans with a

few Muslim households from inside and outside the *para*. There are few linkages with his wife's family, who live quite close by, but only visit occasionally.

4.9 Kirik Chandra: A Hindu labourer and rickshaw puller with a small social capital stock

Kirik is about 30. He is married with two sons and two daughters, and comes from the second and poorest of the three Hindu lineages. He owns only 0.1 acres of land, and makes his living as a labourer and a rickshaw van puller

He lives on a tiny *bari* with his landless father and sharecropper brother at the fringe of the community, in an area separated from other members of his lineage. He has very few kin or relationships of any kind. His father and brother assist in times of sickness but are apparently not in a position to offer much other help. By contrast with most of the other cases considered, but in common with Shamsul Alam, the poorest Muslim, Kirik's household may be taken as an example of a low strong link/low reciprocal engagement type.

His main contacts are with the big Muslim landowners, for whom he labours. He also enjoys weaker connections to the dominant Hindu lineage, whose *bari* are close to his own. Bhabesh has helped his wife to obtain a VGD card and would support him at a *shalish*, and the group as a whole allow Kirik access to drinking water and can be expected to provide some help in times of disaster. Beyond this, Kirik exchanges interest-free loans with a handful of other landless households, and has one or two other relatively loose single-stranded relationships revolving around mutual assistance with house building and other matters.

On his wife's side the household exchanges interest-free loans with a brother and a sister's husband, but there are no other contacts outside the community. The shortage of other forms of social capital is to some extent compensated for by multiple NGO membership, including a buddy affiliation to CARE and membership of BRAC.

5. SOCIAL CAPITAL: BUILDING BLOCKS

Section 4 suggested a number of types of relationship through which social capital, in the broad DFID sense of the term, could be expressed and accumulated. In this section an attempt is made to delve more deeply into how these various building blocks work and inter-connect.

A broad distinction will be drawn in the first instance between relations that are largely internal to the community and those that are external (i.e. bridging) in nature. The internal relations may then be further subdivided into those that are vertical, in Putnam's sense, and those that are horizontal.

5.1 Internal vertical relationships

Vertical relationships, or asymmetric links between parties of differing status, arise primarily in the sphere of agricultural production, but are also evident in various forms of patronage.

5.1.1 Agricultural production relationships

The discussion in the previous section indicated that five basic roles, deriving from differential access to land as the primary resource, may be identified within agricultural production:

- Landlords who lease their land to tenants
- Surplus farmers who manage their own land by hiring labourers
- Self-sufficient farmers who cultivate their own land using their own labour
- The tenants who work the land of the landlords
- The labourers who work the land of the surplus farmers

In addition to the relationships between landlords and tenants, and between surplus farmers and labourers, further relations arise between surplus farmers and both small farmers and tenants, through the provision of tubewell water and power tiller services for ploughing.

The actual situation is, however, more complicated than this. Whilst some pure examples of the various categories could be identified, so too could be many hybrid types. At the apex of the local hierarchy, some individuals combined the roles of landlord and surplus farmer, whilst others lower down might combine tenancy with farming of their own land, or with labouring.

5.1.2 Landlords and tenants

The situation with regard to the ownership and operation of land in the *para* is further complicated by questions of inclusion, exclusion and boundaries. Our investigation was confined to the resident households living in the *para*. As a unit, they comprise a discrete set, but the land that they own does not lie within a single or continuous area. There are examples of outsiders owning land lying within what are generally regarded as the *para*'s boundaries, the prime example being Chowdhury, the advocate, who owns some 20% of the total area. In other instances, *para* inhabitants own land lying beyond the perceived boundary, and these altogether account for about 10% of total holdings. There are also cases of insiders leasing land to and from outsiders, some of which will be inside and some of which will lie outside the boundary. All of this is, in itself, indicative of a situation where the conduct of land based dealings is at least to some extent free of other forms of social linkage.

As noted earlier, land is highly concentrated, with the brothers Azim and Aziz between them owning 100 acres (59%) of the total 169 acres owned by households from the *para*, and accounting for 77 (94%) of the 82 acres that are shared out. Slightly more than half of this goes to other Muslim households and the remainder to Hindus. Most of the Muslims come from within the *para*, but a significant proportion and perhaps a majority of the Hindus are from poor adjoining "land deficit" *para*, and altogether 30 acres (37%) of the land shared out goes to tenants from elsewhere. Whilst the majority of tenants come from the poorer classes, a significant minority, which accounts for a disproportionate area of the land involved, are themselves from the large and medium farm categories.

Land is more commonly offered to tenants in the *boro* than in the *amon* season. Some 60% of arrangements involve a lease, whilst 40% are share cropped. Leases are the norm for poorer tenants, with payment either being made in cash at the start of the season or in kind after the harvest. With cash arrangements, payments are often financed by NGO loans. The preferred share-cropping arrangements are more common with better off tenants, who can more readily provide irrigation and fertiliser

and are better able to hire labour, and as a result will generally achieve higher absolute yields.

We were unable to determine in detail how many years individual arrangements would extend for, but it was clear that there was a range of types of contract, with some lasting only for a single season and others continuing for 10 years or more. It would have been useful to have explored this aspect in more detail and to have seen whether the type of arrangement agreed was associated either with the economic status of the tenant and/or their social distance from the landlord. It would also have been useful to look more systematically at what happens when the conditions of a lease cannot be met by the tenant. The case cited below in relation to the *shalish* (Box 2) indicates in part what may happen, but again it would be interesting to discover whether the rigidity with which conditions are enforced varies according to the wider nature of the relationship between the contracting parties. Impressionist evidence suggests that this is the case, with the poorest most likely to be held to their original agreements. Under these circumstances, those with loans from Grameen are perhaps a little better off, since they are allowed to take out new loans to pay off the old ones, whereas with BRAC they are likely to be required to liquidate an asset.

5.1.3 Employers and labourers

Although less significant as a relationship than tenancy, labour hiring is of considerable importance, and is at least as complex. A number of different types of situation need to be taken into account, each with their own distinctive patterns. The work undertaken may be agricultural or non-agricultural in nature. Arrangements may be permanent or temporary, and the latter may be of a one-off or repeated nature. Activities may take place within the *para* or outside. Finally, cross-cutting all of the other distinctions, are a number of gender differences, which may themselves contain Muslim/Hindu variations.

For men, temporary agricultural work is the most important individual category. Virtually all households are involved to some degree, either hiring or being hired, and sometimes both. In simple numerical terms it is, however, the wealthiest two or three Muslim households who account for the majority of hiring that takes place and therefore outweigh all other relations of this type in significance. The situation of Aziz was explored in some detail (Case 1) and is probably representative of what happens more generally. Here it was found that from a total of more than 30 relationships, a small number of close kin were hired, together with more substantial numbers of Muslims from other lineages and of Hindus, some of whom came from within the *para* and others from closely adjoining communities. Most labourers were hired directly through Aziz' son, although on occasion trusted individuals might be asked to recruit others to work alongside them. No instances of labour gangs being contracted from beyond the immediate area arose in this case, although there had apparently been isolated instances of this with other households.

Some households combined share-cropping and labouring, planting and harvesting their own crops a little earlier or later than the norm in order to take advantage of the higher wages that could be obtained at times of peak demand. Although there were instances of both activities being undertaken on behalf of the same land owner, this was not generally the case and no strong or systematic tendency for land owners to patronise particular households could be detected. Neither did there seem to be any particular inclination by landowners to offer support to those labouring for them in times of particular hardship, although this could not be ruled out in all cases. A more refined analysis of the degree to which any wider obligation might attach to the seasonal hiring relationship could have been obtained if it had been possible to

determine the extent to which the same labourer would engage with the same landowner in successive seasons and years.

Permanent labour arrangements occur much less frequently, being confined to one or two individuals taken on by each of a handful of the largest farmers, and often being tied to the performance of specific tasks, such as STW or power-tiller operation. Off-season employment, outside the main planting and harvesting seasons and mainly taking the form of construction work or livestock husbandry, is in similarly short supply within the community.

A number of households engage in employment beyond the *para*. The relatively high demand for labour during periods of peak activity means it would be unusual for residents to go outside for agricultural work, but a significant minority seek off-season work in brick-fields, timber mills and various forms of construction. A smaller number, amounting to about five households, have sent one or more members out to work on a permanent basis to Dhaka and other urban centres, and benefited from remittances. Whilst other *para* members might sometimes assist in identifying and accessing shorter and longer term opportunities, most households involved seem to make their own contacts or to rely upon labour contractors (*shadar*) operating out of the nearby *Upazilla* town and other nearby bazaars.

Women generally engage less in hired labour than men, but it is still quite common among poorer households. Some work for others on post-harvest operations or transplanting seedlings, and Hindu women might also be engaged in other field operations. Over and above this, the wealthiest households might engage permanent maids. Finally, for the poorest, limited opportunities exist outside the community on road and other construction projects.

5.1.4 The provision of agricultural services

Irrigation is fundamental to land productivity and ownership of control of shallow tubewells, the only form used in the *para*, therefore becomes a significant secondary focus of relationships. In all, 13 STW sets are owned by people living in the *para*. These are mainly used on the medium lowland during *boro* and all remain in the same locations for the duration of the season. There are also a few borings on the medium highland to which pumps can be moved in order to provide supplementary irrigation during *amon* if required.

As already noted in the individual case studies, three of the sets belong to Azim, the dominant individual in the *para*, and one to his son, who also jointly owns another set with a distant relation from the same *para*. Two others belong to other large and medium Muslim farmers. The four sets operating in the Hindu part of the *para* are all owned by Bhabesh and his two brothers. Details of the remaining two STWs could not be obtained in the time available.

One STW normally irrigates an area of 10-15 acres, and on average there would be 10-12 farmers in the group of users. Charging arrangements vary to some degree but would most commonly, for a 0.5 acre plot, include all fuel costs and a seasonal payment of BDT 600. The composition of the handful of groups we were able to investigate showed that most were organised around a core of family and co-lineage members. In a number of instances, water would be distributed between brothers or father and son, but other kinds of groups, including some which involved both Hindus and Muslims, were also found.

As much as anything, these patterns appear to reflect a situation where water can only sensibly be provided to a contiguous set of plots adjoining the pump and where there is a strong tendency for close kin to own adjacent plots inherited from common ancestors. As such, it would be a mistake to read too much into the observed pattern, or to assume a high degree of embeddedness with regard to this particular set of relations. It would, however, be interesting to look at the priority given to different parties with regard to the important matter of who receives water at particular points in time, and to see to what extent arrangements persist from one year to another, since investigations conducted at this greater level of detail might paint a somewhat different picture

5.1.5 Other forms of vertical relationship

Other forms of internal vertical relationship include money lending for interest, although this has become less significant with the expansion of NGO credit (*Section 6.1* below) and in any case could not be investigated in a brief study of the type that was undertaken.

In addition, there are various types of charitable giving and support in times of hardship. The wealthiest households are expected to distribute food during annual festivals such as Eid, and to feed their poorer counterparts at weddings. The better off Muslims contribute to a small fund organised through the mosque that is used each year to tide over the poorest members of their group in the hungry season preceding the main harvest. When more occasional misfortunes such as illness or floods strike, some limited short-term assistance is also likely to be forthcoming, although the better off tend only to help the handful of poorer households with whom they are most closely connected and are unlikely to go so far as offering protection for major assets.

Vertical relations also extend to the sphere of intra-communal negotiation and dispute resolution. Marriage negotiations are a case in point. People will generally attempt to confine these to their close kin, but may well seek to draw in more powerful outside parties if difficulties are encountered; and more exceptionally, such parties may actually make a contribution to dowry payments. *Shalish* (local adjudications) are another, with people expecting more powerful members of their lineage or group to represent them if they find themselves involved in conflicts, although this mechanism is at best only marginally effective where the interests of the weak are set against those in more dominant positions (CARE, 2002). Further details of how the *shalish* functions appear in Box 2.

A final category of (generally) vertical relationship is found in the passing on of knowledge and advice about agricultural practices. This is an important and complicated topic that is clearly of central significance to the GO-IF intervention. As such, it will form the subject of a separate investigation scheduled for 2004, and will not be discussed further here.

5.2 Internal horizontal relationships

The various vertical and primarily economic relationships that have been discussed co-exist with a series of more horizontal or symmetric types of linkage. Some of these revolve around the joint ownership or use of various items and facilities, others involve the exchange of services. Whilst the individual household normally provides the primary unit within which such forms of co-operation takes place, the residential compound or *bari* can also be highly significant, and it is here that this part of the account begins.

Box 2: The *para shalish*

This box deals only with the *shalish* taking place within the *para*. Higher level *shalish* are considered as a part of the discussion of external relationships below.

Para shalish are held several times each year and deal with relatively minor internal disputes. For example:

- A poor crop results in a situation where a tenant is unable to pay the rent that had originally been agreed upon and cannot negotiate a lower rate with the landlord.
- Cattle that have strayed into another person's field and grazed on their crops are seized and impounded until an appropriate level of compensation has been agreed.
- Money is borrowed, but not repaid according to the original agreement.
- Fish are caught without permission on another person's land, or a bund is broken so that fish from an adjacent plot can pass through onto the perpetrator's land.
- A conflict arises between a husband and wife.
- People are not invited to a ceremony when they feel that they should have been.

Sources vary to some extent as to the precise composition of the bench that sits in judgement. All are agreed that Azim and Aziz are the key actors on the Muslim side and that Aziz's two sons are also involved; whilst Babesh, his brother, and Kirod Chandra (a large farmer) are commonly acknowledged to be the most important Hindus. The *shalish* will generally sit close to the house of one of these leading individuals with the location being selected according to the convenience of those in dispute.

Other individuals, who are typically the leading members of poorer and less influential lineages and sub-lineages, are said by some people to also have a role but are not mentioned by others. The difference probably arises from the fact that these are not formally recognised positions and that an attempt will normally be made to arrive at a consensus without the need for the authority of any particular individual to be asserted. Under these circumstances, it seems likely that who plays an important part in particular deliberations will to some extent be a function of the circumstances obtaining and the specific parties involved.

5.2.1 The *bari* as a social unit

We were unable to carry out a systematic enumeration of the *bari* in Azimpara, but it was still possible to piece together an approximate picture from a social map that was drawn, the knowledge of the Field Trainer (FT) and various other more fragmentary sources. These indicated that there are a total of about 25 *baris* in the community with an average size of three households, or some 15 people. However, of the 77 households, some 10-12 of the larger or most recently arrived form their own individual *bari*.

Baris nearly always comprise clusters of what we have termed immediate kin, typically being based on brothers and their households, and extending upwards to incorporate one or both parents and their household where they are still alive.

Isolated instances of poorer, relatively un-connected households and individuals being allowed to construct their own homes on other people's *bari* are also encountered. These exceptional cases may be viewed as an extension of the vertical relations explored above.

As well as jointly owning the ground on which the *bari* is constructed, members may share the ownership and/or use of a number of different items. Typically these might include the stove and kitchen, a pan for boiling rice, a hand pump, and other household items like chairs, tables, glass, and plates. Where more than one household has access to agricultural land, this list might be extended to include various types of assets, including draft animals, ploughs, ladders or polythene sheeting to protect rice seedlings. Among the better-off landowners there might also be STWs, an area of bamboo, a pond and a toilet. The very richest might share a family graveyard.

Hand pumps and ponds were explored in more detail to determine how such arrangements might work and to form a sense of how much variation between *baris* might arise.

5.2.2 Hand pumps for drinking water

In the case of hand pumps a number of different situations were encountered. The optimum layout is where the basic pump is set in an area of bricks, and this is found in 10 (13%) of the 77 households, concentrated among the better off. A further 34 (44%), mainly drawn from the middle strata, have a simple pump of their own, whilst 4 (5%) are able to use the government supplied *tara* pump (described in Case 6) and one the mosque pump. This leaves a further 28 (36%) predominantly marginal and landless households who have no pumps of their own and must rely upon those of other households.

More detailed investigation revealed hardly any *bari* without a pump, however, and in almost every instance, households without their own pumps were able to use those installed by their brothers, fathers or other close kin. Although these were in a sense asymmetric relations, involving an element of dependency of one household on another, it appears that the obligation to make drinking water available to others is strong, and that whilst supplied and maintained by certain individuals, the pumps in practice are treated as the common property of the *bari* as a whole.

5.2.3 Ponds

The situation with regard to ponds is, for a number of reasons, more complex. In the first place they are not standardised items. Most are between 0.04 and 0.1 acres in size and found immediately next to the *bari* of the owner, but a handful are considerably larger and located in more public space. Secondly, they perform a wider range of functions, potentially being used for human bathing, for washing animals, for cleaning clothes and utensils, and as a source of fish. Thirdly, a greater diversity of ownership and access arrangements were found to exist.

Once again it was not possible to conduct an exhaustive enquiry, but by using similar sources to the *bari* investigation, we were able to piece together a broad picture. This revealed a total of 16 ponds, most of which fell under the control of rich and middle farm households. Azim, the richest householder, owned three, but no other household had a stake in more than one.

At one extreme was a very large pond located some distance away from the Hindu quarter. This had originally been established by the grandfather of six of the present household heads, comprising Bhabesh (*Case 6*), his two brothers and three cousins, and has been passed down as a joint inheritance via their respective fathers. Rather than devising a means of commonly utilising the resource, they, in turn, have opted to lease it out at a rate of BDT 6,000 a year to a single individual who then used it for fish culture. In order to protect the investment that has been made, this arrangement excludes access of any kind to other parties.

The second largest pond belongs to Aziz (*Case 1*), the effective leader of the *para*, and is located a short distance from his *bari*. Only his two sons are allowed fishing rights, but anybody can use it to wash vegetables, and Hindu and Muslim children are permitted to swim in it. The bathing of animals is, however, prohibited.

Reflecting the two situations that have already been discussed, other smaller ponds are sometimes jointly owned by siblings or other close kin, and are sometimes the property of single individuals. In either instance, following the pattern observed in the case of Aziz, fishing rights will normally be confined to members of the same *bari*, with fairly free access being granted to others for bathing, other than at times when re-stocking is taking place. On occasions, some fishing rights might be granted to a slightly wider circle of kin living in the immediate locality, and more exceptionally to entirely unrelated individuals, with whom the pond owner had some other connection.

5.2.4 Nursing and childcare

In addition to the nexus of asset-based relations characteristic of the *bari*, members also show a high propensity to mutually exchange nursing and childcare services, and these types of exchange count among those commonly reported in our case study investigations. Together with the much smaller contribution made by close kin from other communities, who are normally siblings and parents of the wife, the *bari* group accounts for approximately 75% of all such interactions (*Table 3*), with the remainder coming from the wider kin and/or same religion group. Many reported relations are largely symmetrical in nature, but in certain cases, most typically relating to older women, child care in particular might be provided and “repaid” by the recipient in some other way as a part of a system of more generalised reciprocity. In all of this, considerable inter-household variations should, however, be recognised. Some households report several interactions and others none, and among the former, some are able to rely exclusively upon immediate kin, whilst others, often those with a smaller kin group, are obliged to interact more with a wider circle.

The types of interaction most commonly taking place within the *bari* derive in part from the mutual concern that close kin will typically feel for each other, but often also in part reflect more practical considerations. It is heavy and time consuming work to carry water more than a few metres so people naturally wish to have hand pumps immediately accessible. Childcare and nursing are most conveniently performed from your own home where they can more easily be fitted in around other tasks, and so forth.

5.2.5 Reciprocal labour exchange

Other types of labour exchange are less constrained by such considerations and typically extend further beyond the *bari*-based kin group.

At periods of peak labour demand, when seedlings are transplanted or at harvest, when wages are high, small land owners and operators may find they can save time

by helping each other out. The same can apply at times of the year when there is little to do in the fields and construction and maintenance work is carried out. Skilled tasks like bricklaying will require specialist assistance, but most people can manage more routine activities such as straw roofing and fence making, and find it easier and more congenial not to have to carry out these tasks by themselves. Help will also be offered when, on a more occasional basis, households have wedding or funeral ceremonies to arrange.

Although a minority of households appear not to engage in such relationships at all, they remain a common feature of *para* life. Once again people will turn to close kin where they can, but are generally happy to spread the net rather further, and occasional instances of reciprocal exchanges taking place between Muslims and Hindus are also reported.

5.2.6 Interest-free cash and petty-commodity loans

Even more common are the exchange of small interest-free cash loans. These will typically be for between 100 and 200 taka and be repaid within a maximum of two to three months. Small farmers might rely on them to buy fuel or fertiliser for the *boro* crop and poorer households to repay their NGO loans. They are also widely employed in lean periods to cover house repair costs and for treatment or medicine in the case of illness. Whilst clearly of most importance to those of limited means, almost everybody seems involved in such transactions to some degree, turning first to immediate kin where this is an option, but relying also on the wider circle and on rarer occasions beyond households of the same religion. On average, a household may engage in three or four such relationships, although there is considerable variation between cases.

Small household items, including oil, rice, salt, onion, kerosene, chillies and coconut oil are circulated in a similar fashion, typically being repaid a few days later after the next market, and usually involving women. Such arrangements also extend to plates and forks loaned for special occasions and even to the short term loan of items of clothing and ornaments.

Finally, in a crisis, seeds or seedlings may be supplied without charge to contacts who would otherwise be unable to plant their crop, in the expectation of an equivalent return at some future date if required. Such examples of generalised reciprocity are confined to relatively small circles of households.

5.3 External relationships

Having considered the range of internal relationships, the final part of this section deals with the links extending from the immediate community to the wider world beyond.

A number of government services find their way to the *para*, and residents from time to time need to approach officials on an individual basis for particular purposes. For the majority, whilst it may not always be impossible to take action on their own behalf, some form of intermediation, involving a combination of powerful insiders and local representatives, will often be required. The earlier case studies began to indicate how Aziz and his son Aminul on the Muslim side, and Bhabesh and his brothers among the Hindus were able to perform this bridging function. A more consolidated account of how it works may now be attempted.

But before proceeding, it should be recognised that, in certain instances, powerful households are able to employ their external linkages largely or purely for their own benefit. This is what appeared to be happening with regard to the small number of government bank loans that came to our attention, although we were unable to carry out any systematic investigation. Similarly, participation in market, high school or other committees by powerful households can be instrumental in accessing opportunities either exclusively or primarily on behalf of themselves or their immediate family members. In other instances, such as the *tara* pump discussed in the Bhabesh case, benefits may be shared between the powerful and other poorer households with whom they are associated. But most commonly a situation is found where powerful households are able to secure resources for onwards transmission to the less well off as a part of a wider system of patronage.

The foremost example of this arises in relation to the distribution of VGF and VGD cards, 25 and four of which respectively had been given out during the two-year period preceding the research. The procedure involved has already been discussed in the Bhabesh case and need not be repeated here.

The pattern of distribution arising is quite complicated. Rather more than half went to the Hindus, which is what one would expect in view of their generally poorer condition, and overall a majority of the cards appear to have gone to the poorer households in the marginal and landless classes, for whom they were officially intended. 40% were, however, appropriated by others (*Table 4*). Looking in more detail at allocation between lineages, it appears that among the Muslims those most closely connected to the dominant households have to some extent been favoured, although with some cards being nevertheless distributed to all parts of the community, excluding the handful of richest households. With the Hindus, there is an apparently more equitable pattern, with all lineages receiving an approximately fair share in relation to their wealth, although there does appear to be a tendency, which cannot be accounted for here, for resources to be clustered among certain extended families/sub-lineages, whilst others of comparable economic status are excluded.

The intermediation of powerful *para* members may also be needed by ordinary households in dealing with matters of land administration at the *Upazilla*, of which there are presently an atypically high number as a result of the area being under settlement⁹. More exceptionally, the powerful may intervene on behalf of their weaker counterparts to secure access to *khas* land resources (*again see the Bhabesh case study no.6*). A similar function may be performed where land and other cases that cannot be resolved at *para* level, or which involve wider interests, are taken up by the higher level village *shalish*. An example of the matters with which this deals appears in Box 3.

5.4 Wider patterns

The earlier parts of this section and the preceding case studies have demonstrated the diversity of possible sources of social capital if the concept is defined in the more inclusive sense employed by DFID. But to what extent does the picture that has emerged conform to the more restrictive definition associated with Putnam's civic society?

Following the criteria detailed in section 2.1 above, this depends upon an affirmative answer to three questions: whether networks of engagement are primarily structured along horizontal (symmetric) rather than vertical (asymmetric) lines; whether they are

⁹ For a fuller explanation, see CARE 2003

predominantly weak (acquaintance) as opposed to strong (kin-based); and whether norms of reciprocity are generalised rather than balanced in nature. Each may now be considered in turn.

Box 3: The village shalish

Since the village to which the *para* belongs is very large, two *shalish* have been formed, one covering the east and the other the west. One or two cases go up from the *para* for resolution in an average year.

The most recent concerned a woman who was her husband's second wife and had no sons. After her husband's father died, she decided to return to her home community in a neighbouring district. She made a claim to a part of the inheritance so that she would be able to support herself, but this was resisted. Opponents of her husband from another *para* then offered her their help in pressing the claim. The matter could not be resolved within the family or by the *para shalish* and a case was therefore started at the district court. But it soon became apparent that this was going to prove very expensive for both parties. It was therefore agreed that the matter should be referred back to the village *shalish*, where a compromise was arrived at and a financial settlement duly made in the wife's favour.

5.4.1 Vertical relations

With regard to the first question, it will be clear that relations are structured much more along vertical than along horizontal lines. Within the community, the asymmetric links between landlords and tenants, and between the hirers and providers of labour are central to the livelihoods of most, if not all households. These are accompanied, in turn, by secondary and equally asymmetric re-distributive mechanisms in the form of regular charitable giving and the more occasional provision of material support under conditions of individual or more generalised stress. Beyond the community, the links mediated by the relatively wealthy and powerful minority emerge as of greater importance than those that the majority of households are able to initiate on their own behalf. It is, however, useful to enquire further into the nature of these internal and external relations, and in particular to ask whether, as certain observers suggest (*Hashemi and Schuler 1992*), they conform to the patron-client type.

A patron-client relationship may be said to arise where multiple links exist between individual actors of unequal status. Such multi-stranded relations will typically represent a bargain whereby the more powerful partner secures rights to the labour of the subordinate, in return under-writing the minimal capacity of that labour to reproduce itself by guaranteeing security against shocks. From the client's perspective, the guarantee comes at the price of the freedom to enter into alternative and perhaps more attractive contracts with other potential employers. Such patron-client relations may be contrasted with those of a single stranded and more purely contractual nature, such as might arise between a landowner and an itinerant gang of workers hired for an agreed sum to carry out a specific task.¹⁰

¹⁰ The distinction between multi- and single-stranded relationships corresponds broadly to what other observers might describe respectively as feudal and capitalist relations. But the precise meaning of these two terms has been subject to much debate, and they are probably best avoided here.

As with the question of strong and weak relationships (*Section 3.3*) there are degrees of multi-strandedness, and the quality of the data collected does not permit a very refined analysis of the issue. But if attention is confined mainly to the central economic relationships, it is at least possible to look for broad patterns.

Re-visiting the case studies, it is possible to find some examples of clearly multi-stranded patron-client type relations, co-existing with a rather larger number that conform more closely to the single-stranded type. The wealthier households studied typically have a handful of clients in the form of tenants who are also permanent or temporary labourers, and some of these are also helped in other ways, receiving VGD cards or help in times of hardship. But most of the poorer households with whom they engage appear to be either tenants or labourers, not both, and not to engage to a significant degree in other relations with the landowners. By the same token, there are poorer households who receive charitable donations from the wealthy, or are able to access cards through their offices, who do not appear to engage in any wider form of relationship with them.

From the perspective of the poor it is possible, at the same time, to find some households who are entirely dependent upon individual employers or tenants, and others who are able to access multiple sources, and are thus less dependent on the patronage of any particular person. There are also instances where a poor person may depend exclusively upon a single employer but is still able to go to other wealthier households for assistance of different types. A final indication that patron-client relations are less than pervasive is found in the fact that any safety-net facility that may be offered by the better off to poorer households is strictly limited in extent. Help, for example, is very unlikely to extend as far as assisting someone in need to avoid a distress land sale. The limited nature of any such downward obligation in turn restricts the willingness of the poor to contract such a relationship in the first place.

Vertical relations are not then markedly patron-client in nature, but are they predominantly strong? Table 3, which is derived from the case studies discussed in Section 4, helps to provide an answer. The strongest relations are defined as those encompassing the immediate family and other lineage members. Those with other members of the same religious group and residing in the same *para* are regarded as "semi-strong". Those with other religious groups from the same *para* then become "semi-weak"; and those with non-family members from other *para*, "weak".

Taken as a whole, the table makes it clear that comparatively strong relations predominate, and this is confirmed by many of the individual accounts that have been presented. In extreme cases we see, for example, close kin providing each other with land, engaging in share-cropping relations, mutually exchanging irrigation water and linking in other less significant ways. We also see instances in both the Muslim and Hindu communities of leaders arranging access to VGD cards for kin who are not properly qualified to receive them.

On the other hand, it is also apparent that vertical relations are much less likely to be contracted with other members of strongly associated (i.e. kin-based) groups than their horizontal counterparts. This is particularly so with regard to the key issues of labour hiring and tenancy. Imbalances in land distribution between Muslims and Hindus, and the comparative overall abundance of the land resource, create conditions under which it makes sense for weaker relations to be entered into, and few people seem to find this in any way problematic. Indeed, in addition to the predictable construction of land-based relationships between wealthier Muslims and

Table 3: Frequency of different types of assistance and service given and received by the nine case study households by closeness of relationship (%)

Strength	Giving					Receiving				
	Stronger		Weaker			Stronger		Weaker		
Coverage of relationship	Same lineage	Same religion	Same para	Other para	Total	Same lineage	Same religion	Same para	Other para	Total
<i>Predominantly horizontal</i>										
Use pond for fishing	100				100	40	50		10	100
Use pond for washing	82	18			100	50	50			100
Use hand pump	81	19			100	83	17			100
Nursing	78	22			100	77	23			100
Child care	73	27			100	79	21			100
Exchange household items	67	25	8		100	74	26			100
Free labour	53	20	20	7	100	67	7	20	7	100
Interest-free loans	52	26	7	15	100	59	27		4	100
Help in ceremonies	50	38		11	100	50	50			100
Build and repair house		58	25	17	100	43	43		14	100
<i>Predominantly vertical</i>										
Arrange marriage	56	33		11	100	50	50			100
Help in natural disaster	53	37	11		100	50	42	8		100
Distress sale of assets	45	18	36		100	83	17			100
Supply agricultural materials	38	50	8	4	100	42	37	16	5	100
Use irrigation facilities	36	55		9	100	40	60			100
Dowry/marriage expenses	33	33	17	17	100		100			100
Access legal services	33	50		17	100	57	43			100
Use crop wastes	31	59	9		100	33	58	8		100
Access <i>Upazilla</i> facilities	31	46	8	15	100	33	33		33	100
Advice for <i>shalish</i>	18	41	35	6	100	39	28	28	6	100
Hire labour	17	28	56		100	11	39	50		100
Advice on agricultural practices	16	60	20	4	100	56	11	11	22	100
Access NGOs	13	60	27		100	20	40	40		100
Obtain chairman's help	11	56	33		100					100
Sell land		50		50	100	60	40			100
Give shelter on homestead					100	50	50			100
Lease land		67		33	100	40	20		40	100
Access work outside <i>para</i>		60	20	20	100					100
Lend money with interest			100		100					100
OVERALL	41	43	13	3	100	46	38	11	4	100

(Totals may not all add up to 100 due to rounding)

poorer Hindus, instances of the reverse are also found, when it might be expected that those few Hindus with good access to land might be inclined to favour poorer members of their own religious group.

5.4.2 Horizontal relations and norms of reciprocity

The dominance of vertical relations in general leaves relatively little space for relations of a more reciprocal or horizontal type, but these still play a significant part for certain actors at least.

This is most evident with regard to the powerful minority, who are able to participate in the local branches of political parties and other forms of association related to facilities such as schools and markets. The links thus formed with their peers from surrounding communities and in the wider fora of the Union and *Upazilla*, enable them to perform a bridging function that, in turn, provides an additional dimension to the vertical relations contracted within the community. Their poorer counterparts, by contrast, have little or no opportunity to take part in the civic associations, which to Putnam comprise the essence of social capital. In their case, such horizontal relations as can be maintained are confined mainly to the reciprocal exchange of caring services, small commodities and interest-free cash loans, and even this more truncated form of social capital is not available on a significant scale in all instances.

It is also evident from Table 3 that the great majority of the horizontal relations that do exist are strong rather than weak in nature, although as was noted earlier, this can often be as much a function of practical considerations as of sentiment. There are, however, some limited exceptions to this general rule, where poorer people are able to collaborate across religious and communal divides. And finally, whilst predominantly conducted in the context of strong linkages, and whilst the available evidence is sketchy, it appears that such reciprocity as does exist is often of a generalised rather than of a more specific type. Indeed, only a minority of the exchanges that have been documented, such as the free exchange of labour, appear to carry with them an expectation of an immediate and equivalent return. More often, as with nursing, it is anticipated that an equivalent return will be made at some future point if required. More extended and complex barter-type patterns of reciprocity, where one or more types of help are provided in return for assistance of a different kind, are also encountered.

5.4.3 Taking stock

In sum, the application of the three criteria make it clear that this is a relatively uncivic society, which currently only possesses a modest supply of what Putnam would regard as social capital. But the fact that the dominant vertical relations are not exclusively ordered along patron-client lines; that forms of horizontal relations are present which are not entirely "strong" in nature; and that norms of reciprocity are quite strongly generalised; together indicate that it is not entirely of the uncivic type. These elements may in effect be taken as representing the potential for a more civic society in future. Section 6 provides the opportunity to begin to explore how far current NGO interventions in general, and more specifically those associated with CARE, can go in turning that potential into reality.

6. SOME PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS ON ACCESS TO NGO SERVICES

Whether they do so will, in the first instance, be a function of the type of strategy pursued; and more specifically whether this may be characterised as "co-existence", "collaboration" or "conflict". What these all mean is explained further in Box 4.

Box 4: How NGOs interact with local power structures

Hashemi and Schuler (1992) suggest that NGOs have to choose between one of three broad strategies when seeking to work in a rural community.

1. Peaceful co-existence. This is a widely favoured option, where the NGO seeks, as far as possible, to avoid interacting with dominant groups and elders. Faction leaders will normally not oppose such an approach, since activities are generally designed to help the poor with credit, employment and materials, and fit in well with traditional ideas of charity. They also believe that NGOs may have powerful allies in higher echelons of the state structure, and that opposition could be counter-productive. Sometimes, leaders may actually claim to have been instrumental in drawing in agencies arriving in this fashion as a means of increasing their own prestige.

2. Collaboration. In situations of potential conflict or hostility, NGO representatives will often seek alliances with dominant faction leaders, sometimes encouraging them or their close associates to take on positions of authority in groups, with little regard for any negative implications this may hold for formal targeting objectives. Government programmes are also especially likely to operate in this mode, with workers typically coming from the same social background as local elites, and with the bureaucracy as a whole content to maintain the *status quo*.

3. Confrontation. A few NGOs like GSS have opted to openly confront the rich and powerful, for example by putting up rival candidates representing the poor in local elections. This can prove to be a dangerous strategy, with a strong risk of evoking a violent reaction, which police and government officials are unlikely to seek to control.

Outcomes will then need to be reviewed to see whether vertical relations have been re-enforced or horizontal ones given greater prominence, whether it is strong or weak links that have been encouraged, and whether new horizontal bonds have been created with other organisations.

The current investigation has focussed on pre-existing forms of social capital and cannot delve into these matters in any depth. Some preliminary data and indications are, however, available and these are summarised below, starting with the work of other NGOs, and then turning to CARE itself.

6.1 The overall NGO presence

Before CARE established a presence, five other NGOs were already functioning in the *para*. Grameen, with 39 members under its credit scheme, and BRAC, with 25 members and a non-formal primary school, were the most important (*Table 4*). The other three - Plan, which offered educational services, and Sustainable Social Services (SSS) and Come to Work, with their largely credit based programmes - counted only 15 members between them. The Grameen members were found in almost equal numbers in both parts of the *para*, and were represented in 55% of all households and 64% of Hindu households. BRAC, together with Plan and SSS, operated only in the Hindu quarter, where it covered 75% of all households.

Members of all classes are found among the NGO membership, but in overall terms, marginal farm households were most likely to belong, followed in sequence by small farmers, middle farmers and the landless (*Table 4*).

Table 4: Households with NGO members by religion and class

Table 4.1: Number of households with members of NGOs other than CARE by religion and class

	Large	Medium	Small	Marginal	Landless	Total
Muslim						
BRAC					0	0
Grameen		2	15	1	1	19
PL					0	0
SSS					0	0
CTW		1	1		1	3
Hindu/Christian						
BRAC	1	3	6	10	5	25
Grameen	1	2	6	7	4	20
PL	1	1		3	1	6
SSS				2	3	5
CTW			1			1
Overall						
BRAC	1	3	6	10	5	25
Grameen	1	4	21	8	5	39
PL	1	1		3	1	6
SSS				2	3	5
CTW		1	2		1	4

Table 4.2: % of households with members of NGOs other than CARE by religion and class

	Large	Medium	Small	Marginal	Landless	Total
Muslim						
BRAC						0
Grameen		40	60	50	20	46
PL						0
SSS						0
CTW		20	4	0	20	7
Hindu						
BRAC	50	100	86	83	42	69
Grameen	50	67	86	58	33	56
PL	50	33		25	8	17
SSS				17	25	14
CTW			14			3
Overall						
BRAC	17	38	19	71	29	32
Grameen	17	50	66	57	29	51
PL	17	13		21	6	8
SSS				14	18	6
CTW	0	13	6	0	6	5

The situation in the Hindu part of the *para* is somewhat different and corresponds more closely to the “collaboration” type (Box 4). The larger number of NGOs functioning here and the higher overall level of participation partly reflect the presence of more relatively poor households of the kind that most NGOs seek to target, but are also in part a reflection of efforts made by leading members to draw in organisations. The connections between present and former members of the Union Council and Bhabesh who, in turn, made it his business to cultivate NGO links, seem to be a particularly significant factor here, and both Bhabesh himself and his other medium farmer brother are themselves members of most of the organisations present.

All sectors of the Hindu population benefit, although there are considerable variations in the degree to which different parties participate. In the case of BRAC, most households in the dominant lineage (Lineage 1), containing the wealthiest households, are members, as are all of the rather poorer lineage (Lineage 2), to which it is most closely connected. The more detached Lineage 3, by contrast, has lower membership. A similar but somewhat less polarised pattern is found in relation to Grameen, whilst members of the other smaller NGOs are more evenly distributed across the community. Put in slightly different terms, it appears that the BRAC group is to some extent shaped by what Putnam would describe as strong relations, whereas Grameen has greater potential to become a truly civic association. But this, of course says nothing about the actual effectiveness of either grouping.

Within these broad overall patterns, further differences between individual households may be identified, with some households emerging as far more prolific “joiners” than others. One household has members in no fewer than five separate NGOs, whilst two are involved in four, twelve in three, and seven in two; and only four are not members of any at all. The biggest joiners come from among the marginal and landless households in the dominant lineage (Lineage 1) and Lineage 2, although the latter also includes some who do not participate at all.

Whilst it is difficult to arrive at very firm conclusions on the basis of the data presented here, there does therefore appear to be some evidence to suggest that the interest of leading members is both instrumental in attracting NGO resources in the first instance and, at least to some extent, in channelling opportunities towards those with which it is more closely connected. It would appear, in other words, that pre-existing strong relationships may be militating against the formation of new and weaker ones. In the process this may be limiting the scope for new internal horizontal relations.

But once again here, more detail would have to be gathered as to the volume of resources flowing to different parties before a comprehensive view could be formed. It would also be useful to look at the reasons for non-involvement, which at least part of the time are likely to involve self-exclusion on the grounds that the resources available are not particularly useful in the light of the livelihood strategy pursued. A person enjoying the security of a permanent position as an STW operator might, for example, be relatively disinclined to risk taking out a loan to start or expand a small business.

6.2 CARE’s intervention

Turning now to CARE, it was found that 56 of the 77 households in the *para* belong to the GO-IF FFS. Reflecting the nature of the technologies promoted, which require some access to land and favour those with more secure tenure, virtually all full

Table 5: Households with full and associate FFS members by religion and class*Table 5.1: Number of households with full FFS members by religion and class*

	Big	Middle	Small	Marginal	Landless	Total	%
Muslim	2	3	14			19	68
Hindu	2	3	3	1		9	32
Christian						0	0
Total	4	6	17	1	0	28	100

Table 5.2: Percentage of households with full FFS members by religion and class

	Big	Middle	Small	Marginal	Landless	Total
Muslim	50	60	56	0	0	46
Hindu	100	100	60	13	0	33
Christian			0	0	0	0
Total	51	58	41	6	0	28

Table 5.3: Number of households with associate FFS members by religion and class

	Big	Middle	Small	Marginal	Landless	Total	%
Muslim		2	9	1	1	13	46
Hindu			2	5	4	11	39
Christian			1	3		4	14
Total	0	2	12	9	5	28	100

Table 5.4: Percentage of households with associate members by religion and class

	Big	Middle	Small	Marginal	Landless	Total
Muslim		40	36	50	20	32
Hindu			40	63	44	41
Christian			50	75		44
Total	0	25	38	64	29	36

members are drawn from the big, medium and small farmer categories, with the numerically dominant small farmer category forming the largest individual group and making up more than 60% of the total. The buddy or associate members form an almost perfect mirror image, with nearly all coming from the small, marginal and landless categories and hardly any large or medium households being included (see *Table 5*).

Of the 28 full member households, 68% are Muslim and 32% Hindu, whilst Hindus and Christians together account for just over half of the buddy category. The preponderance of full Muslim members reflects the greater overall wealth and greater size of the group, rather than any attempt to capture the activity as such, and taken as a proportion of all households within the different classes, Hindu participation is, in fact, somewhat higher. Whilst the more powerful Muslims show considerable interest

in the activities promoted in this instance, the relatively greater involvement of Hindus again appears to indicate the enthusiasm of Bhabesh and other leading members to seize any externally introduced opportunity that arises on behalf of their wider community.

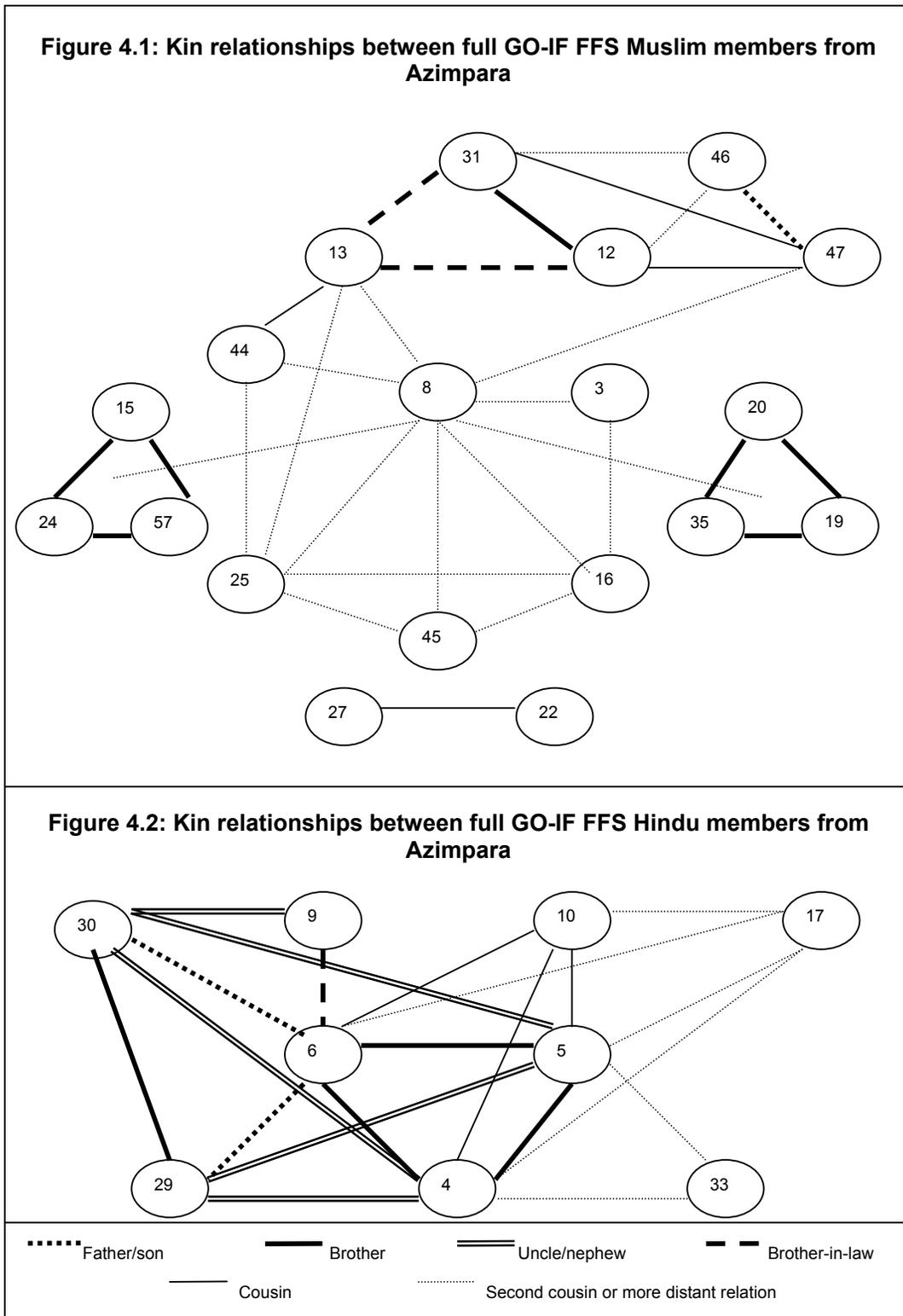
Neither is there any strong evidence of domination by particular lineages or exclusion of others, with degrees of participation and non-participation again largely reflecting relative differences in wealth. At the level of individual households there is, however, quite a strong correlation between non-participation in CARE and lack of involvement in other NGOs at the poorer end of the spectrum.

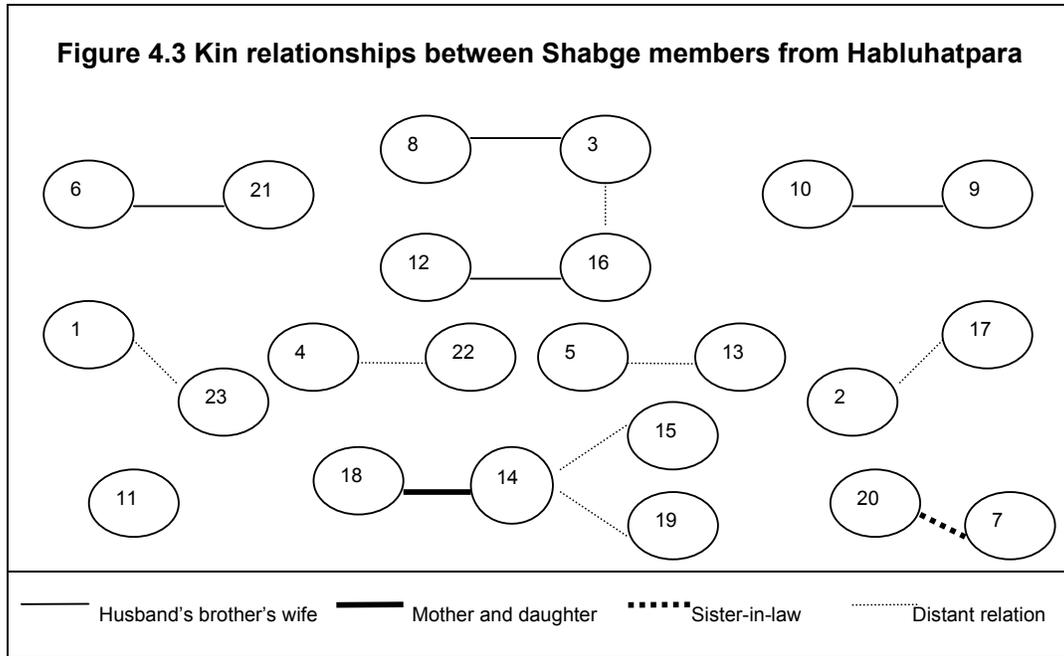
On balance, it would appear that there may have been at least some promotion of the desirable weak relations in this instance, but it is important to note that all of these comments are based on only the most superficial examination. No account has been taken of the levels of individual participation, in terms of attendance of sessions and uptake of technologies, and hence of any distribution of benefits arising. A more detailed investigation of these aspects is planned in a subsequent study of the CARE Rural Livelihoods Programme itself, and this could lead to the emergence of a rather different picture, together with the formation of an impression of how sustainable any changes might have been. At the same time, planned enquiries into the transmission of agricultural knowledge will make it possible to delve further into any connections between social and human capital formation activated by the interventions. Other enquiries will look in more detail at the degree of success that has been achieved through attempts at new forms of bridging undertaken as a part of the wider rights-based initiative.

Finally, a word should be said about Shabge. In the present enquiry, which focused on a community where GO-IF had been working, it was only possible to make a quick visit to one of the Shabge sites and to reproduce only a tiny part of the basic study. This did, however, throw up one or two potentially important insights.

The GO-IF FFS was formally made up of men and women but effectively male dominated. Given virilocal patterns of residence, where a woman nearly always moves to her husband's community at marriage, this meant that the new organisation brought together people who already had many other connections (*see Figures 5.1 and 5.2*), and is likely to have functioned in a way that reflected this. Shabge, on the other hand, works only with women and mainly with those drawn from the poorer categories of household. As such, it is apparent that pre-existing kinship links between members are far fewer and less well established (*Figure 5.3*), and that the potential scope for the creation of new "weak" link structures, of the type specifically highlighted by Putnam, may therefore be much greater. This view is re-enforced by preliminary investigations carried out into the types of intra-group relations that already exist, which showed quite highly developed patterns of horizontal reciprocity, but much lower levels of other forms of interaction, and hardly any present capacity to form "bridging" relations with the world beyond the *para*. But whether CARE is able to help realise this potential, and whether it would be sensible for it to attempt to do so, is, of course, another matter. This can again be explored in the Programme study, as well as being incorporated in the ongoing investigation of gender relations.

Figure 4: Kin relationships between members of CARE projects





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