

DIFFERENTIAL CREDIT SOURCE-UTILIZATION PATTERN AMONG AGRICULTURAL OPINION LEADERS AND NON-LEADERS: FARM-LEVEL EVIDENCE FROM BANGLADESH

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1. Introduction

Farming in Bangladesh has become more labour-capital-intensive following the Green Revolution. Most farmers need funds to buy material input e.g., fertilizers, irrigation water from non-agricultural sources. Thus, the role of agricultural credit, which serves as an important catalyst, is widely recognized in the agricultural development process (Rahim, 1977) especially in the adoption of farm innovations (Feder, 1982).

Although the formal production credit is an expected component of farm management its relative low importance in rural areas in Bangladesh can be explained by the subsistence nature of the country's economy. Nevertheless, availability of sufficient formal credit can play an important role in channelling necessary funds for rural development in general and agricultural development in particular.

The general trend of agricultural credit receipt pattern shows that the lion's share of the formal credit is enjoyed by the wealthy and privileged farmers (Nathan, 1977). The marginal and small farmers have restricted access to formal credit which presumably explains to their deplorable economic condition (Rahman and Islam, 1987).

It has been shown that in a farming community, there are influential farmers (opinion leaders) (Rogers, 1962) whose characteristics and approaches to farming differ from those of the non-influentials (non-leaders or followers) (Rogers and Van Es, 1964). The characteristics of such farm producers vary also according to different levels of development (Chamala, 1981).

There are several formal financial institutions through which credit is available at the *Upazila* (country) level (Yunus, 1981). Informal financial market is still an important and sometimes principal source of farm credit. This is because in most LDCs, the formal financial institutions are still not self-sustaining and a large segment of the population is still dependent on informal financial markets (Von Pischke and Adams, 1980). Miller (1977) portrayed the voluminous disbursement and importance of such an informal credit system in Nigeria, Mauri (1988), Adera (1987), in Ethiopia, Bouman and Houtman (1988) in Sri Lanka, Manig (1990) in Pakistan and Chaudhury and Ghafur (1981) in Bangladesh. This form of agricultural loan is, however, more often harmful rather than beneficial.

Due to various political, social, environmental and geographical factors, villages in Bangladesh are at different levels of progress ranging along a continuum from progressive to non-progressive villages. So, it is important to look at the credit utilization pattern at villages of different degrees of development.

As the issue of rural agricultural credit is of critical importance in any agricultural system much of the hidden areas needs to be exposed. This paper examines some of these areas: sources of loans and their utilization pattern; differences in the pattern of use of sources of farm credit by opinion leaders and non-leaders; proportion of the credit need fulfilled; terms of loans and the differences in credit source utilization pattern between villages at different levels of development.

2. Concept of Opinion Leadership

In rural communities, there are leaders whose influence is either periodic or constant in many aspects of the life of an individual. These leaders are either elected (e.g., elected to the village Union Council bodies), self-constituted (e.g., leadership position by virtue of birth in a dominating family) or group selected (an informal position assigned by friends and immediate neighbours) (Tully, 1971; Poplin, 1972). The group selected and empowered leaders are known as opinion leaders. Rogers (1983) defined opinion leadership as the degree to which an individual is able to influence informally the attitudes or overt behaviour of other individuals in a desired way with relative frequency.

The position of the opinion leadership is earned and maintained by the individual's social accessibility (Wateren, 1987), abiding by the social system's norms and some degree of technical competence (Agrawal and Pandey, 1985). Jones (1964) emphasized anonymity as an important dimension of influence. That is, opinion leaders perform a leadership function unwittingly, unintentionally and without apparent motive. Therein, some degree of behavioural change is brought about. However, these leaders are not totally devoid of formal power (Sen, 1969) and strictly anonymous in the traditional rural community (Hossain and Chamala, 1991). They act as a source of information and sometimes perform a "gate-keeper" function of selective perception of information flow into the community (Crouch, 1986).

Depending on the requirement of degree of role specialization opinion leadership can be specific (monomorphic) or general (polymorphic). However, monomorphic or polymorphic opinion leadership does not exist solely in any rural community.

Although the degree of informal influences by opinion leaders vary their actions are universal in all kinds of societies (Van den Ban, 1970).

In agriculture, technological innovations enter into the farming communities from time to time. In Bangladesh, with a lack of adequate official support systems for explaining

an innovation, the traditional approach of local informal opinion leadership is the prime locus of information and influence in the farm decision-making process (Hossain, 1988a).

As opinion leaders are group-selected informal but integral constituent in the group they could be the important dimension of group-based credit disbursement doctrine. Hulme (1990) described that the success story of Grameen Bank (Bank for villagers), that appears to have broken the monopolies of moneylenders and traders, is closely associated with the group structure which overcomes problems of information and creates an incentive system that fosters repayment. Also taking into account the socio-economic and political environment of Bangladesh, Abed (1980) and Debus (1980) tested the importance of group-based formal credit advancement.

3. Study Locale

Data for this comparative study of agricultural credit source utilization by farmers were obtained from a survey during 1989 in Mymensingh district, Bangladesh. Two Unions (similar to precincts), surveyed in this study, from the same *Upazila* represent two areas in different stages of the development. They were selected randomly from two groups of Unions - relatively progressive and less progressive. They had similar physical, agro-climatic, socio-cultural, demographic, religious make up and topographical characteristics. Also, identical programmes of technological change were introduced in these areas almost at the same time.

There were no formal financial institutions in the area under study. However, the branches of major Nationalised Commercial Bank (NCBs) and the agricultural bank (Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB)) were operating in the *Upazila* headquarters. Although both groups of farmers had to travel to these banks farmers from the progressive Union had relatively better transport.

4. Methodology

Two villages were selected for this study. One village was chosen from the progressive Union purposely because of its proximity to the main road transport system, markets, towns, agricultural extension centres. Another village was selected randomly out of 28 villages of the less progressive Union which was far away from those modern facilities.

This was based on the differences in the rate of technological adoption and other qualitative and quantitative criteria (Hossain, 1991).

The progressive and less progressive villages had 169 and 172 households respectively (BBS, 1986) including farm families, absentee farmers and landless families. Only farm operators were included in the sample for interview.

As this study uses sociometric approach random sampling of such network data, as compared to monadic analysis (individual as the unit of analysis) is usually very difficult. To have greater understanding, network analysis must sample either intact structures or at least part of them relevant to the research objectives (Rogers and Kincaid, 1981, pp. 102-103).

After such a scrutiny only 109 and 108 farmers from the progressive and less progressive villages respectively were selected as sampling frame.

Five farming practices, namely, HYV rice cultivation, vegetable cultivation, use of insecticide, and treating sick cattle and milking cow, were considered as the area where sociometric information was sought. Each respondent was asked to nominate only one person as a preferential informal consultant on each of the five farming areas. At least one nomination was considered to be indicative of an opinion leader status. Thus 49 opinion leaders were identified from the progressive village and 52 from the less progressive village.

Association between users and sources of credits were identified by applying Chisquare test. Student's t-test was used to establish the differences of proportion of credit need fulfilled among different groups of users.

5. Results and Discussions

Since the introduction of modern yield-increasing inputs in the late 1960s to the present, some changes have taken place in Bangladesh agriculture (Alauddin and Tisdell, 1986a). Funds are needed to increase farm production to finance modern practices which require extra doses of fertilizers, pesticides, irrigation water and above all, improved varieties of crop seeds as well as the use of small farm machinery.

Table 1 reveals that less than one-third (28%) of opinion leaders from both progressive and less progressive villages stated that they did not require any credit. So did one-third (33%) of the non-leaders. This could be due to the farmers' sounder financial posi-

Table 1

DIFFERENTIAL CREDIT NEED SITUATION OF OPINION LEADERS AND NON-LEADERS

Credit need situation	Progressive village (N1 = 109)		Less progressive village (N2 = 108)		Total	
	OL ^a	NL ^b	OL	NL	OL	NL
	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %
1 No need	11 (22.45)	22 (36.67)	17 (32.69)	16 (28.57)	28 (27.72)	38 (32.76)
2 Could not get	4 (8.16)	8 (13.33)	7 (13.46)	10 (17.86)	11 (10.89)	18 (15.52)
3 Obtained	34 (69.39)	30 (50.00)	28 (53.85)	30 (53.57)	62 (61.39)	60 (51.72)
Total	49 (100.0)	60 (100.0)	52 (100.0)	56 (100.0)	101 (100.0)	116 (100.0)

^aOL = Opinion Leader^bNL = Non-Leader

tions (Hossain, 1991). But often this is not the case. Their perception of no need of formal credit might be due to many factors: friends' or villagers' past bitter experiences of threat of property confiscation; substantial non-interest costs of borrowing from formal sources due to middle-man, broker or corrupt officials (Alam, 1981; Ahmed, 1989); extremely high high interest rates from informal sources (Chaudhury and Ghafur, 1981); strong informal influence from rural elites not to borrow from formal sources (Kashem, 1987). Furthermore, acceptance of credit is not always a blessing. It is especially cumbersome for them when the amount is small in terms of need and which is not even supervised, interest rates are high, the general ability to repay is feeble and spent in non-productive pursuits (Hossain *et al.*, 1988b). Also partly to obey the injunction of Islam against interest (Arndt, 1987; Khan, 1987), the people with such social orientation could hesitate to apply for a loan. These factors might have contributed to a conservative attitude towards credit and prevent them from borrowing.

More non-leaders (16%) than opinion leaders (11%) were unable to get agricultural credit (cf. Table 1). About two-fifths of the opinions leaders (39%) and slightly less than half (48%) of non-leaders either had no need for credit or could not get it.

5.1 Source and Quantum of Credit

The rural financial markets in Bangladesh on the lending side comprises dichotomous components: the organized formal credit institutions: e.g., banks and cooperatives;

and unorganized informal sources of credit, namely friends, relatives, neighbours, money-lenders, traders, shopkeepers and rich farmers.

Table 2 shows sources of credit for both opinion leaders and non-leaders. Data clearly indicate that more opinion leaders (47% and 29% in progressive and less progressive villages respectively) obtained formal credit from (BKB) and (NCBs) than non-leaders (20% and 7% respectively in progressive and less progressive villages). This could be due to the fact that opinion leaders possess more land than their followers (Hossain,

Table 2
DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE FARMERS ACCORDING TO THEIR SOURCES OF CREDIT

Sources of credit	Progressive village				Less progressive village			
	OL		NL		OL		NL	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Formal								
BKB ^a	13	38.24	4	13.34	6	21.44	1	3.34
NCBs ^b	1	2.94	2	6.67	2	7.14	1	3.34
BKB & NCB	2	5.88	0	0	0	0	0	0
Formal-informal								
BKB & moneylender	0	0	1	3.33	2	7.14	0	0
BKB & friend	0	0	2	6.67	2	7.14	1	3.33
BKB & relative	3	8.82	0	0	2	7.14	0	0
NCB & relative	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NCB & moneylender	0	0	0	0	1	3.57	1	3.33
BKB, relative & moneylender	1	2.94	0	0	0	0	0	0
Informal								
Moneylender	5	14.71	9	30.00	2	7.14	7	23.34
Moneylender & friend	1	2.94	1	3.33	0	0	1	3.33
Friend	1	2.94	1	3.33	4	14.29	7	23.34
Relative	1	2.94	3	10.00	2	7.14	6	20.00
Friend & relative	1	2.94	1	3.33	0	0	0	0
Neighbour	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3.33
Crop mortgage	0	0	0	0	1	3.57	0	0
Gold ornament mortgage	0	0	1	3.33	0	0	1	3.33
Brass utensil mortgage	0	0	1	3.33	0	0	1	3.33
Selling calf	0	0	0	0	1	5.6	1	3.33
No source mentioned	5	14.71	4	13.34	3	10.72	1	3.33
Total	34	100.0	30	100.0	28	100.0	30	100.0

^aBKB = Bangladesh Krishi (Agricultural) Bank

^bNCB = Nationalised Commercial Bank

1991) and use it as collateral for formal credit. Almost every loan involves some form of collateral, implicit or explicit (Plaut, 1985). The formal lenders are more inclined to use explicit collateral or guarantees (Barro, 1976; Benjamin, 1978; Plaut, 1985) than the informal lenders (Feder *et al.*, 1988). Also agricultural credit, due to its specific character, requires a client to possess some land to be eligible for the loan programme.

The importance of the land collateral factor could again be validated from Table 2. A higher percentage of the opinion leaders, from both progressive and less progressive villages (12% and 25% respectively) borrowed money from combined formal and informal sources than did the non-leaders (10% and 7% respectively). This corroborates Islam's (1978) results showing that 70% of BKB loans went to farmers with three acres or more, while the remaining 30% went to households who possessed 12.5 or more acres of land. The preference for wealthy farmers by BKB, the prime lending bank, needs no further explanation. Sadeque (1986) observed a similar phenomenon in respect of Special Agricultural Credit Programme (SACP) loan distribution.

When land is not available as a collateral, other forms arise (Feder *et al.*, 1988). As can be seen from Table 2, borrowers used their crop, gold ornaments or brass utensils as a form of collateral for loans.

There are more formalities attached to disbursing formal credit as and when needed, but informal sources dispense with elaborate paperwork or demands for and complicated collateral requirements which probably discourage many of the farmers from borrowing from the formal sector (Miracle *et al.*, 1980). Hence the informal sources supply the major share of the rural credit in Bangladesh (Batterham and Majid, 1987).

A careful analysis of data from Table 2 reveals that the large majority of the non-leaders from progressive and less progressive villages (57% and 83% respectively) obtained their credit from informal sources in contrast to opinion leaders in these two types of villages (27% and 32% respectively). A fair amount of contact is evidenced with local moneylenders, together with other formal and informal creditors, for loans by opinion leaders in progressive (21%) and less progressive village (18%) (cf. Table 2). This result suggests that agricultural opinion leaders are not necessarily moneylenders, because leaders used various informal sources including moneylenders as their important sources of agricultural credit.

Because of the predominant use of formal sources by opinion leaders and informal sources by non-leaders (see Table 3) a definitive association between the credit source-user pattern can be established. Such an association exists between opinion leaders

Table 3

DIFFERENTIAL SOURCES OF CREDITS AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH USERS

Users	Sources of credit ^a			X ²	d.f.	Coefficient of contingency (c)
	Formal	Formal-informal	Informal			
	%	%	%			
1. Progressive village						
Opinion leader	55.17	13.79	31.04	7.02*	2	.34
Non-leader	23.08	11.54	63.38			
2. Less progressive village						
Opinion leader	32.00	28.00	40.00	12.57**	2	.44
Non-leader	6.90	6.90	86.20			
3. Villages						
Progressive	40.00	12.73	47.27	6.13*	2	.23
Less progressive	18.52	16.67	64.81			
4. Opinion leaders						
Progressive village	55.17	13.79	31.04	3.26NS	2	
Less progressive village	32.00	28.00	40.00			

^a Numbers in 'no source mentioned' category were not included.

* = $P < .05$

** = $P < .01$

NS = Not significant

and non-leaders in progressive and less progressive villages as well as between villages (χ^2 significant at $P < .05$, $P < .01$ and $P < .05$ respectively). However, credit source-user relationship between opinion leaders in two types of villages did not reveal any significant association (cf. Table 3).

Furthermore, in progressive and less progressive villages both the opinion leaders and non-leaders borrow from friends, relatives and neighbours (see Table 2). Such informal financing was the natural arrangement in rural areas long before the introduction of formal institutions (Bouman and Houtman, 1988). This informal borrowing in rural communities also can be explained by the existence of informal social groups of strong interpersonal preferences called reference groups of which opinion leadership is an indispensable and integral part. The interaction in reference group between friends, relatives and neighbours occurs on the basis of reciprocity. Thereby, a mutual obligation in the social system exists to support their fellow members in time of need. Thus,

granting a loan is traditionally a part played by the group centered leadership (Hossain, 1988a) reflects its social system's security role (Manig, 1990).

Remarkably, this kinship basis of borrowing was found to be stronger in the less progressive village than in the progressive one. This can be explained by the geographically disadvantaged location in a remote area of the less progressive village. Thus, the information as a basic moulder of attitude could not permeate the social system and as a consequence formal agricultural sources of credit still remain as an alien concept. In its place informal social mechanism provides the opportunity to establish such borrowing privileges.

In addition, the operations of the informal sector derive their rules and regulations from the country's culture and customs. Informal sector transactions are conducted on the basis of long experience with the local system, trust and intimate knowledge of customers (Ahmed and Adams, 1987). Money is borrowed not once but repeatedly, and loans are made piecemeal for extremely short periods. Informal lenders offer and accept payment in cash and kind, and are flexible in rescheduling loans. Superior local intelligence and the possibility of applying social pressure and exercising extralegal forms of sanctions enable moneylenders to collect debts in a timely manner (Bouman and Houtman, 1988).

5.2 *Need Fulfilment*

The amount of credit received by the respondents in both villages was inadequate. This is quite evident in the case of farmers who had used more than one source (formal and informal sources) (cf. Table 2) to fulfil their credit needs. Nevertheless, formal sources were more satisfactory than informal sources in meeting credit needs of the respondents. Table 4 shows that on average formal sources alone had fulfilled 78% of credit requirements of the respondents while informal sources have met slightly less than half (49%) of the need. This difference was statistically significant at $P = .0001$ level. There was also a significant difference of credit need fulfilment of opinion leaders (63%) and non-leaders (48%) in the less-progressive village ($P = .01$). Furthermore, the credit needs of the respondents from the progressive village were proportionately more often met (66%) than those of the respondents from the less progressive village (55%). This difference was statistically significant at $P < .0.5$ level.

These statistical differences are due mainly to higher performing and more satisfying formal credit acquisition by the opinion leaders than informal credits available mostly

Table 4

DIFFERENTIAL CREDIT NEED FULFILMENT OF USERS

Users	Proportion of credit need fulfilled (mean)	t-value
1. Source		
Formal	78.13	6.27***
Informal	49.18	
2. Progressive village		
Opinion leader	70.69	1.59NS
Non-leader	60.19	
3. Less progressive village		
Opinion leader	62.50	2.41**
Non-leader	48.33	
4. Villages		
Progressive	65.63	2.31*
Less progressive	55.17	
5. Opinion leaders		
Progressive village	70.69	1.31NS
Less progressive village	62.50	

* = $P < .05$ ** = $P = .01$ *** = $P = .0001$

NS = Not significant

to the non-leaders.

5.3 Costs of Credits

Data in Table 5 show that formal sources charged 16% interest per annum. Contrarily, informal sources charged about 11 to 23 times higher (180% to 360%) than the formal sources. Such usurious rates of interest, usually 15 - 30 per cent per month, is a crucial additive problem, especially for small farmers who become voluntary or involuntary loan defaulters (Bhaduri, 1977, 1980). It also causes the increase of the numbers of rural landless people (Hossain, 1985).

Costs of credits for opinion leaders and followers differed in both villages. Relatively more opinion leaders obtained comparatively cheaper formal agricultural credit than non-leaders (Table 5) as they borrowed mostly from formal sources (cf. Table 2).

Table 5
DISTRIBUTION OF RATE OF INTEREST OF SAMPLE FARMERS

Sources of credit	Progressive village		Less progressive village	
	Rate of interest (per year)		Rate of interest (per year)	
	OL	NL	OL	NL
Formal				
BKB	16	16	16	16
NCBs	16	16	16	16
BKB & NCB	16	0	0	0
Formal-informal				
BKB & moneylender	0	16 & 180	16 & 240	0
BKB & friend	0	16 & FH ^a	16 & FH	16 & FH
BKB & relative	16 & FH	0	16 & FH	0
NCB & relative	0	0	0	0
NCB & moneylender	0	0	16 & 240	16 & 240
BKB, relative & moneylender	16, FH & 180	0	0	0
Informal				
Moneylender	180 to 240	180 to 300	240 & 300	180 to 360
Moneylender & friend	180 & FH	180 & FH	0	180 & FH
Friend	FH	FH	FH	FH
Relative	FH	FH	0	0
Friend & relative	0	0	0	U ^b
Neighbour	0	0	U	0
Crop mortgage	0	240	0	240
Gold ornament mortgage	0	180	0	216
Brass utensil mortgage	0	0	U	U
Selling calf				
No source mentioned	U	U	U	U

^aInterest free or hidden

^bInterest rate undetermined

Another form of cost, namely, non-interest costs of credit from banks were mentioned by the borrowers. Formal power holders in the local villages and dishonest officials were indicated (secretly) as factors responsible for the practice. Ultimate consequence of this process has been reported by Alauddin and Tisdell (1986b): "inclusion of these costs brings the effective costs of borrowings from the formal sources closer to those of the informal sources".

The informal lenders who have some social bond with the borrowers (friends, relatives, neighbours) were more inclined to forego any interest (see Table 5). Jones' (1984) fin-

dings corroborate this result. However, sometimes these interest rates are concealed in various modes of repayment in kind and, thus, escape the attention of many surveys (Kurup, 1976). The exchange of friendship interests in particular form (commodity or gift) (Gregory, 1981) could be a reciprocal interaction of relations among numbers of such bonded community who has been living there for generations.

6. Summary and Implications

As a first study of its kind, this paper presents the results showing that there are differences in the pattern of use of the agricultural credit sources between opinion leaders and non-leaders, in villages of differing levels of development.

The findings suggest that a higher percentage of non-leaders, compared to opinion leaders, did not have access to agricultural credit. But proportionately, a relatively higher percentage of opinion leaders compared to non-leaders obtained credit. This form of credit acceptance pattern was true for the respondents in the progressive village but in the less progressive village an almost equal proportion of leaders and non-leaders availed themselves of credit.

The results show that more respondents from the less progressive village than the progressive village could not obtain credit from the official sources. However, the bulk of the formal credit went to opinion leaders rather than the non-leaders. Consequently, more non-leaders in both the villages used informal sources of credit.

In both villages, the opinion leaders who use high performing and satisfying formal sources of credit were more satisfied with the degree to which their credit requirements were met than the non-leaders.

Data also demonstrated that agricultural credit is a part of the agrarian society's comprehensive bond of socio-economic networks of relationship.

Curiously enough though, historically strongly existing informal money market in the country could satisfy on average only about half of the credit requirements of the sample farmers.

A careful analysis of data shows that opinion leaders' use of informal sources in both types of village did not differ remarkably and also indicates that they were not found to be involved in typical moneylending process.

In terms of cost informal sources, mostly moneylenders, charged 11 to 23 times higher rates of interest than their formal counterparts. But non-interest cost of formal credits

was shown to be a costly factor.

Interest rates were implicit about the debtors who had social relationships with the creditors. However, in such a reciprocal relationship interest transacts anonymously in various modes of repayment.

Development officials should make loan information simple and available for the farmers to change their traditional attitudes towards formal loan services.

At small group level development agencies should seek help from opinion leaders as a vital information linker and legitimizer. They would expedite the metaprocess of loan acquisition processes with guarantees. In this context, leadership training among farmers could generate more competence and skills on credit information, acquisition, utilization and savings as well.

Furthermore, encouraging initiatives similar to those of the Grameen Bank in other areas would create sources of credit for poor farmers. This would prepare poor farmers for participation in the economic system. Also existing commercial banks, with or without establishing branches in less progressive villages, should relax collateral requirements for small farmers to help them break the monopolistic credit markets. In its place a supervised credit (Scobie and Franklin, 1977) system would be an important addition of this process.

In addition, both qualitative and quantitative control of formal credit should be done through agricultural extension system which is directly involved in developing agriculture at village level. Similarly, there is a need to involve farmers' groups in extension strategy. This will ensure working with more farmers, fostering local institutions, reducing costs to government, increasing credit awareness and minimizing credit default rate.

Until the formal financial institutions become fully effective, in the transition period dualistic agricultural credit system of both formal and informal credit market would prevail. This means that the policy makers should legitimize the informal money market as they have an important role to play. However, economic education to increase adoption and utilization of formal credit and how to increase savings should be imparted among farmers. Importantly, such educational and other appropriate measures should be taken against few moneylenders who exploit the situation of poor farmers. This approach helps in planned change.

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Abstract

Based on the farm level data, this study investigates certain relatively less known but crucial facts about the rural credit market in Bangladesh. Performance of formal and informal financial sources are evidenced and analysed. Findings indicate that there are differences in credit source-utilization pattern between agricultural opinion leaders and non-leaders in villages at different points in the development continuum, i.e., progressive and less progressive. A higher proportion of non-leaders (compared with opinion leaders) failed to obtain agricultural credit. While many opinion leaders did not need any credit due to their better economic position, out of those who needed it, more opinion leaders used formal sources. In contrast, although non-leaders preferred formal sources they obtain credit only from the informal sources. Informal financial agencies accounted for an overwhelming proportion of the source of credit supplied in rural Bangladesh. These informal credit agents, however, could satisfy only half of the credit requirements of all the farmers (leaders and non-leaders). The monopolistic and exploitative nature of informal credit market has been identified and interpreted.

Although formal credits were predominantly used by opinion leaders they were not found to be involved in typical moneylending process. It was found that loan transactions between opinion leaders and non-leaders occurred within the social network of existing relationships. The data showed the actual interest on such a loan transaction to be either free or concealed.

It is recommended that the development officials should make loan information available and simple for the farmers to change their attitudes towards formal loan services. Development agencies should also take into consideration the development disparities among villages and the disadvantages encountered by farmers in credit acquisition. Existing social networks should be used for information dissemination and possible loan guarantor schemes. Also, economic education to increase adoption and utilization of formal credits and how to increase savings should be launched among farmers.

STRUCTURE DIFFERENTIELLE DE L'UTILISATION DES SOURCES DE CREDIT PARMI LES CHEFS DE FILE DE L'OPINION AGRICOLE ET LES NON-CHEFS DE FILE: AU NIVEAU DES FERMES AU BANGLADESH

RESUME

S'appuyant sur des données réunies au niveau des fermes, cette étude examine certains faits, peu connus mais cruciaux, concernant le marché du crédit rural au Bangladesh. La mise en oeuvre des sources financières, officielles ou non, y est démontrée et analysée. Le résultat de ces recherches met en évidence des différences dans la structure source-utilisation du crédit, entre les chefs de file de l'opinion agricole et les non-chefs de file dans les villages, selon qu'ils se trouvent à des points différents dans le continuum du développement, c'est-à-dire selon leur degré de progressivité. En comparaison avec les chefs de file de l'opinion, la proportion des autres fermiers n'ayant pas réussi à obtenir un prêt est beaucoup plus élevée. De nombreux chefs de file n'avaient pas besoin de crédit étant donné leur meilleure situation économique. On constate cependant que, parmi ceux qui en avaient besoin, un plus grand nombre de chefs de file ont utilisé une forme officielle de crédit. Par contraste, et bien que préférant les sources officielles, les non-chefs de file ont obtenu leur crédit uniquement de sources non-officielles. Les agences de financement non-officielles représentaient une proportion extrêmement importante des sources de crédit disponible au Bangladesh. Ces agents de crédit non-officiel ne pouvaient cependant satisfaire que la moitié des demandes de crédit faites par l'ensemble des fermiers (chefs-de-file ou non). Le caractère monopolistique et abusif du marché du crédit non-officiel a été identifié et interprété.

Malgré que les crédits officiels aient été utilisés surtout par les chefs de file de l'opinion, ces derniers n'étaient pas impliqués dans un processus typique de prêts d'argent. On a constaté que toutes les transactions de prêts entre les chefs de file d'opinion et les autres, s'effectuaient à l'intérieur d'un réseau social de liens déjà établis. Les données indiquent que l'intérêt réel sur une transaction de prêt de ce genre était soit inexistant, soit dissimulé.

On recommande que les administrateurs en charge du développement facilitent et simplifient l'accès à l'information pour les fermiers afin d'établir un changement d'attitude envers les services de prêt officiel. Il serait également nécessaire que les agences de développement prennent en considération les disparités de développement entre les villages, ainsi que les désavantages auxquels se heurtent les fermiers dans l'acquisi-

tion du crédit. Les réseaux sociaux déjà en place devraient être utilisés pour la dissémination de l'information et éventuellement pour une réalisation de projets de prêts sous garantie. Il faudrait aussi mettre en place parmi les fermiers un système d'éducation économique qui leur permette d'adopter et d'utiliser davantage les formes officielles de crédit, et qui leur indique les moyens d'augmenter leur épargne.

