

Voluntary Associations: Alternatives to Dispute Resolution and Maintaining Social Order

Amina Khatun¹, Ruhul Amin²

Abstract: In state societies, protecting social norms and resolution of conflict are administrated by laws and regulations. Besides, there are different types of nonprofit village voluntary associations that are prominent to maintain social order in a locality. This paper explored the nature, pattern, and effectiveness of voluntary associations along with an investigation into the socio-economic and cultural factors behind this phenomenon, specifically, the village of Richi in Habigong district, Bangladesh. The village associations of Richi have committed members and their dynamic working capacity. Local government personnel and the governing body of voluntary associations have some understanding of each other in order to negotiate and monitor their activities. Doing this qualitative study, data were collected through in-depth interviews, KII, and observation methods. Informants are members of voluntary associations who are serving the social welfare of the villages, and the villagers. The study revealed that these associations participated in multiple activities including conflict resolution, developmental activities, fundraising for education, and developing the leadership of the village. Thus the performance of village associations achieved their goals and became awarded an Adorshogram.

Key Words: Voluntary Organizations, social order, conflict resolution, village, development.

1. Introduction

Associations have left more traces than volunteering in the historical, archeological, and anthropological records. Many anthropologists have included descriptions of associations in their ethnographic accounts of various preliterate societies (e.g., Anderson 1971; Bradfield 1973; Goldschmidt 1959; Lowie 1950: Chapter 13; Ross 1976; Schultz 1902; Smith 1997; Webster 1908). The history of associations (voluntary associations, common interest associations) is very important because associations were clearly the first form of nonprofit organizations (NPOs) to arise. They still dominate this sector in all societies in terms number of separate groups and members/staff (e.g., Smith 2000). In Bangladesh, over three-quarters of the population lives in villages. Most of the village voluntary association common features are recreational activities but the village of Richi have different account. For the smooth running and well-being of the villages the village organizations of Richi, in Habigong, Sylhet division are exceptions. Voluntary associations of Richi village play a crucial role in the development and operation of villages. Villagers formed and regulate the management of their own organizations. For

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Sylhet, Bangladesh

² Independent Researcher

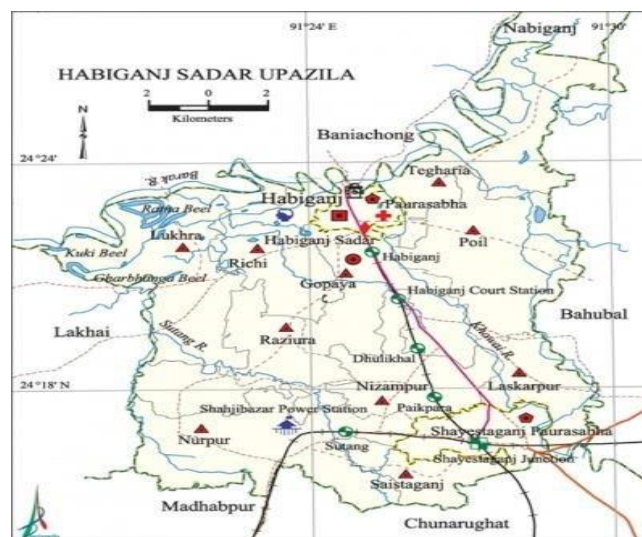
their long experiences, they solve suddenly arises problems, inconsistencies of any village matter through own organizations. Village groups are made by their own villagers who have the courage to work together. After hard work and consciousness, they became efficient and skilled. Local governments also have a good understanding and support of their activities. Volunteer organizations have been delivering social services to the poor, destitute, elderly, and disabled for many years.

2. Methodology:

2.1 Study Area:

Richi Adorshogrom is located at Ideal Richi Union of Habiganj Sadar Upazila, Sylhet division, in Bangladesh. The area of the Ideal Richi Union Parishad is 4658 (sq. km) and its population is approximately 30288 (census, 2011). There are 15 villages under 5 Mouza and Richi village is one of them. The Village maintained its distinct identity over time in a variety of disciplines, including education, culture, religious activities, and athletics. It consists of three unions There are four organizations in the four corners of the village named Ishankuna, Ognikona, Aairakuna, and Sagorkuna. Majhgao is in the middle of the village and it is the center of all organizations.

Map1: The Study Area



Source: Google map

The study was exploratory and qualitative in nature. Its aim was an in-depth understanding of the nature, pattern, and significance of voluntary organizations and how it works in contemporary societies. The study was based on primary and secondary data. Secondary data was collected through the review of relevant literature like journal articles, books, reports, etc. For collecting primary data In-depth interviews, Key Informant Interview (KII), and case studies were conducted. Following a purposive sampling technique, we ensured 20 respondents. Using a checklist, 20 In-depth Interviews were conducted at a venue preferred by the respondents. The interviews

included questions related to organizations and the participation of women in the organization. Each interview was audio-recorded, with the permission of the respondent. A thematic analysis of qualitative methods was followed to analyze the interview transcripts. Different categories were then grouped together to produce broader themes as discussed in the findings section.

2.2 Operational definition:

i) Voluntary Association:

Voluntary associations understand as formally organized named groups most of whose members whether persons or organizations are not financially recompensed for their participation (Knoke 1986:2). A definite problematic aspect of volunteerism is its various definitions, or requirements, of it. In *The Values of Volunteering*, the authors found four requirements of volunteering: “non-obligatory, carried out for the benefit of others (such as a society or an organization), unpaid, and occurs in organized context” (Dekker and Hal man 2003:1). In the United Nations’ definition of a volunteer: it is someone for whom the actions are voluntary, who does not receive financial compensation, and who helps out others (Musick and Wilson 2008:12). However, much of the literature that aims to define and provide categories to understand volunteerism is etic. They rarely take into account the perceptions of the volunteers themselves. In anthropological research, the emic understanding of what constitutes volunteerism is significant. In this study, though there were criteria for participation, which included active participation as a volunteer, participants were allowed to self-identify as volunteers and to discuss what they felt was appropriate volunteer behavior and orientation.

To further complicate the issue of defining volunteerism, there are differences in volunteering across the globe. A 2001 *Washington Post* article (Buckley 2001) noted that In Brazil, volunteerism historically was about services provided by upper-class Catholics to the poor, but with the growth of non-governmental organizations and encouragement by Ruth Cardoso, the first lady to then-president Fernando Henrique Cardoso, volunteerism gained participants from all segments of the population. Social Resources Theory states that “the more social capital and human capital one possesses increases the amount of volunteering one does” (Hodgkin son 2003: 45).

ii) Dispute Resolution:

There are three types of dispute resolution. Mediation, Arbitration, and Litigation. In mediation, a neutral third party will help the disputants to consensus on their own. Working with the parties together or sometimes separately mediators can try to help them hammer out a resolution that is sustainable, voluntary, and nonbinding. In Arbitration a neutral third party who is responsible to resolve the dispute act as a judge. Litigation is the most familiar type of dispute resolution which refer to the hearings and trials system which is conducted by the informal leader.

iii) Social Order:

Social order is a fundamental concept in sociology that refers to the way in which the various Components of society social structure and institutions, social relations, social interactions and

Behavior and cultural features such as beliefs, norms, and values work together to maintain the

Status quo. According to Hobbes, modern states were created in order to provide social order. People agree to empower the state to enforce the rule of law, and in exchange, they give up some individual power (Hobbes, 1957).

iv) Anthropology and Volunteerism

Recent anthropologists have written about volunteers and the concept of volunteerism in the context of applied projects, the study of NGOs, and their own roles and identities during research or projects. However, in terms of research directly related to the experiences and motivations of volunteers themselves, there are relatively few studies that have been conducted by anthropologists, though some sociologists have employed ethnographic methods in collecting data on this topic. For example, sociologist Susan Eckstein conducted ethnographic research on volunteerism and focused on “collectivistic roots for giving” (Eckstein 2001:829) He stated that his ethnography is one “of hope” (Huff 2007:1) due to the positive outreach of the volunteers. He also discussed the complexities of his dual roles as a volunteer and ethnographer.

Harley Scherck (2008) found the idea of exchange to be important among those he interviewed, and he suggested that volunteers in some circumstances get or expect something in return (for example, power or prestige) for their theoretically “altruistic” behavior (Schreck 2008:166). In addition, he observed how volunteers he interviewed made decisions about who to serve or to continue serving based on their assessments of who was “truly needy” (2008:167).

3. Findings and Discussion

Richi Adorsogram is known for its unique local mechanism for the well-being and dispute resolution of society. Through their sincere and dynamic activities in the village, social order has been maintained for a long term. Two types of informal leadership are actively working for those. One is a Panchayat system and the other is a voluntary social organization. In the history of the Indian Sub-continent Panchayat was a rural administrative unit with judicial responsibility. Panchayat means a body of five wise persons. The term “Panchayat” implies an assembly of five or more persons (Sarker 2013). In Richi Village, ten or eleven senior members of the villages are Panchayat members. On the other hand, there are numerous organizations in this village, including a sports club, volunteer club, and farmers union, among others. Those are also a crucial part of this village for their active roles and responsibility. Panchayat members also rely on them.

This paper focuses on the volunteer village club. We have joined three volunteer clubs as part of an investigation. Those organizations’ guiding principle is “peace, development, and education. Generally, voluntary associations dealt only with recreational and entertainment activities but in Richi Village, it is more than that.

3.1 Richi Somaj kollan Joboshongho

It is a voluntary organization for young boys but here age range is high from 20 to 45. The senior members of the village are their advisors and instructors. It was established in 1978. This organization is divided into four sections based on the different parts of the

community. Majhgao is the central part or heart of all organizations. The Joboshongho office is situated there. This organization is divided into two sections, one is Justice Division and the other is administrative division. The organization has its own structure. The number of members of the organization is 150. The executive council has 41 members and 7 advisors (among the advisors are former presidents, secretariat, and chief mentor).

They perform different types of activities and they have the full authority to do that. The goal of this organization is to develop society, regulate village society, guide youth, etc. This division is used to solve any problem and regulate the village community by denouncing offenses such as thievery, child marriage, and conflict resolution among other things. They advance marginalized individuals via education, efficiency, and skill. They are increasing the consciousness of the villagers through educational growth. By counseling the parents, they are able to eliminate child marriage. If parents don't understand, they should seek legal advice and prevent their children from early marrying. This division makes decisions about any village development projects, such as school construction. In the village, they build schools and colleges. By eliminating violence and crime, this group assists villagers in living in peace.

They save young boys from becoming addicted to drugs. If any young boy is detected playing gambling, he will be beaten or penalized. They mentor young people and help them become productive members of society by bringing them into organizations as members. They are utilized in volunteer activities, such as assisting pupils and apprehending criminals.

3.2 Tojammal Hosen Friends Club:

It's a young boy's organization whose ages are between 20 and 28. The founder Tojammal hosen is well-known and trustworthy with his friends. He organized some of his friends, and young boys in this village and established this organization. This is also a voluntary organization. Mainly they are working as a study assistant but they have other activities like the collection and distribution of winter clothes, during floods distributing food among the village poor, etc. They assist in re-enrolling pupils who have dropped out of school. They assist pupils who are struggling in their studies. They assist students in public examinations such as the Primary Education Certificate, Junior School Certificate, and Secondary School Certificate. They also assist students by providing books and money as needed. In the village, they start a night school. Members of the organization donate 20 takas each week to help the organization and continue schooling. Due to their efforts, a college has been established in this village.

3.3 Chatrikollan Songstha

There is a separate group for girls alone named Chatrikollan Songstha. This organization is dedicated to the development of young girls and teenagers. It consists of a group of well-educated young women. They work to improve the mental health of women. The majority of the women in this organization are between the ages of 20 and 26 and they are college students. Villagers who are considering joining the group are not enthusiastic. 'Girls aren't interested in joining organizations,' stated one of the organization's members. They want to remain at home.

i) Counseling young or adolescent females:

In the community of Richi, the suicide rate among the young has risen dramatically. A girl attempted suicide by ingesting the poison and died as a result. The members of chtrikollan songhstha counsel young, dissatisfied girls and aim to reduce the risk of suicide in these young women. They assist students who have dropped out of school in resuming their studies.

Women's engagement in organizations is not welcomed by the majority of the villagers. One of the respondents, a school teacher named Jesmin (anonymous), stated that "girls are interested in participating in organizations, but their families did not allow them." One of the most significant barriers to girls' participation in organizations is superstition. Some of the girls stated that they wanted to join the organization but that their families wouldn't let them.

ii) Leader Selection and Power structure of those organizations:

Leaders of organizations are well-liked in the village. They are obeyed by everyone in the village. They have the authority to punish anyone who violates the law. There is a president in charge of the entire organization. There are also additional people who are a part of the group. There are several instructors in organizing in village society. This organization's instructors are elderly and well-respected individuals. The organization's members follow the president's orders. The president made a decision based on the advice of the instructor.

The leader is chosen by a perceptible vote. In a village society, a leader should be respected. He must possess the ability to persuade others. He should be a formidable opponent. Everyone should be aware of him. One of the respondents stated that the village head is chosen based on his ability and experience in the hamlet.

In Richi village, the elected and legally recognized ward and village tract administrators constitute the principal local justice providers. Both the election and nomination parties form executive councils of voluntary organizations. The election is held by direct vote of the members and in the case of nomination, the decision of the advisor is considered final. The duration of an executive council is three years. In the selection of the leadership of the organization, those who are (young), educated, eloquent, and social people in the village are selected. In these local government members, chairmen of Union Parishad are not involved. Commonly, however, the village leaders are the first priority in resolutions, and if unsuccessful, the case is forwarded to the Thana level. But surprisingly, they become successful in ninety percent of cases. The locally respected elderly people are the principal local justice providers along with the young person. They run their activity as village justice committees. In this case, elected members and chairmen are not considered justice providers rather they respectfully handle the case on organization and work as third-party mediators.

3.4. Links to a state system:

The law only stipulates that leaders at these levels should collaborate with the village people. But their pre-hearings and prior decisions are not included in court processes in any institutionalized way.

i) Dispute resolution: Types of disputes and crimes

The most common disputes resolved across all areas are marriage disputes (including divorce, quarrels, adultery, and domestic violence), land disputes between villagers or kin (related to inheritance, divorce, and disputed land/household plots), and debt disputes

(related to informal money lending). They are outspoken in their resistance to anti-social and anti-economic action.

ii) Dispute resolution Procedure:

Mediation and reconciliation, avoiding conflict escalation, are used across all areas. However, to varying degrees, this is combined with the arbitration. Where a perpetrator is identified and asked to admit guilt, such as in theft and debt cases, mediation takes the form of negotiating the value of compensation. Arbitration is more frequent because village justice providers can issue punishments. The elderly of the village sends the youth if there is an issue. They go out and do the responsible thing. If the perpetrator denied the act he/she has to count Taka 10,000 as fined. This money is used for school and Madrasa's work. A fine of Taka 25,000 is enforced if a girl is assaulted.

Each party is heard one by one in front of the other, and commonly relatives on each side act as witnesses. There was no evidence of physical punishments. In all areas, it is common for dispute resolvers to consider the economic situation of the losing party when deciding on compensation and payment method. One of the offenders was fined Taka 5 lakh for assaulting a female.

Informal counseling for court cases Ponchayet and the leader run this activity from each corner. Barakat Ali (60), in-charge secretary of the Central Richi organization (Richi Social Welfare Youth Organization), said that Ponchayet runs the judicial process, they are the guardian of the village. But youth people can interfere in an immoral act. Sahid (30) join secretary of Ariakuna said that, before forwarding any case to the thana level, we tried to solve it ourselves.

iii) Complaints and reporting of cases:

The atmosphere is informal and there is a large space for participation in the negotiation of a final settlement but the justice providers do also intervene to set the appropriate tone and suggest settlements. If the representatives of the organizations accept justice, then everyone must accept it. If somebody doesn't come to terms, then those who are involved in the dispute have to pay a fine of Taka 10,000. If the representatives of the organizations accept justice, then everyone also accepts it.

A monetary deposit will be required prior to the trial. Those who violate the rules are being boycotted. If an oppressed person patiently stated that he or she doesn't desire justice but is dissatisfied with it, the oppressed person will be unable to offend anyone. If they do, they will fine Taka 20,000.

iv) Cause of choosing village court

Common sense, experience, advice from elders, and scattered and varied knowledge about certain law articles are the primary sources of norms and rules applied. Unwritten customary and religious norms also influence decisions, such as avoiding divorce, using spiritual oaths, and ritual community offerings. One of our respondents Mr. Foyez said that the organization has been extremely beneficial to us. People are living in harmony with one another. This is really unusual in other regions. Another respondent stated that "We don't feel there is any bias here. The father doesn't indulge the son's offender. If we fail then we hand over the case to the local administration."

4. Maintaining Social order

Social order is a core theoretical issue in the social sciences. The problem arises because Human Beings are both individual and social. If we were each living alone on a private planet, we could do whatever we wanted and would never have to worry about anyone else. Or, if each of us were attached to one group mind, we would have no individual impulses and urges. Coordination requires that people develop stable expectations about others' behavior. When Societies vary in their levels of coordination and cooperation and, therefore, in their levels of social order. The highest known levels of social order on the planet are found among the social insects -ants, wasps, and bees. Ants manage to coordinate their activities to obtain food, deal with garbage, and dispose of their dead (Johnson, 2001). Sometimes human groups can attain relatively high levels of social order even under difficult circumstances. Societies may not always be so resilient, however. Theories of social order explain how the order is produced and maintained and why some groups, towns, and societies have more order than others.

The anthropological premise is, Individuals are understood as human beings, who do not live or exist in isolation but interact with each other in everyday life. This means that we do not follow The Hobbesian way of regarding people as atomized, solitary actors, who behave like wild? Animals, are hostile to each other and need institutions of central authority (Leviathan) to survive. Thus the 'social' in our social order concept refers to the sociability and intentionality of interactions that characterize human behavior. However, social is understood in distinction from societal (Mann 1990, 34).

The voluntary organization from each corner also patronized those who were landless, marginal, and poor peasants. Abdul hoque (40), Ex-secretary of Ishankuna, the businessman said We are always active in social welfare work. For those who are indigent, landless, and cannot afford treatment, we collect money from the organization for supporting themselves. Many landless are engaged with our agricultural land to support their living.

4.1 Voluntary Organizations ensures Protective Order: An Example of Human Harmony

The term 'Protective order' is used because these voluntary groups have some mechanism for controlling social violence, conflict, social problem, and any sorts of harassment. Generally, when residents require legal assistance, they must travel to town since they are unsure who will be able to assist them. Richi's residents, on the other hand, do not have to deal with this issue because of their community organization. However, it's also worth evaluating whether non-profit organizations obstruct local government operations. It is also a question of whether local institutions are being run as a pressure group in the shadow of social reform or whether any form of exploitation is taking place the study revealed that, this village is conducted by the Indian federal system. Richi village generates political leaders, members, chairmen, and Upazilla Chairmen. Four corners of the villages have their autonomy. There were multiple activities of those organizations including financial support, developmental work, educational fundraising, and developing leadership. The presence of the voluntary organization in the village is a common phenomenon but the village Richi is an exception because of its different welfare and judicial activities.

Paid-staff nonprofit service agencies now dominate the nonprofit sector in developed/industrialized and post-industrial/service societies in terms of wealth, income, and influence. This latter, familiar form of NPOs arose thousands of years after associations and has come to prominence only in the past 100–200 years in modern societies (with the exception of major world religious NPOs). Book (1972: Part One). A recent set of definitions of association and related concepts can be found in Smith, Stebbins, and Dover (2006: 23 and passim).

The main problematic issue about defining an association is with regard to the voluntary versus coercive nature of individual decisions to join them. In 20th-century research, trade/labor

unions and religious congregations have sometimes been omitted from the category of associations on the grounds that joining is either hereditary (in the case of religious congregations) or compulsory (in the case of closed-shop unions). The problem of definition remains for associations in preliterate societies. 1. Village dispute resolution. A core characteristic of Voluntary organizations in Richi's is a large variety of actual practices. Different factors account for this complexity, including the type of dispute/crime; their justice preferences and beliefs; the skills and personality of the dispute resolver. This makes it impossible to draw up a generalized model and fixed typologies compared with other volunteer organizations in Bangladesh.

4.2 Constructing Mosque, Madrasa, and Eid-Ghah

The money they received from conflict resolution is mainly used for village development. The members of Voluntary organizations are also involved in the infrastructural development of the villages. They give their own labor and expend the money. Foyez Miah (37) said that our village is united. if there is any problem, the elders send the youth they go there and try to mitigate it. If not, 10000 Taka is fined. The money goes to the Panchayet fund and then it is forwarded for the construction school or madrasa, or completing running construction. The organization has no budget of its own. In case of donation by local members, local chairmen, Upozilla chairmen, including MP helps to raise the fund. Expatriates also help these organizations. Rafique (28), secretary of 'Sayed Tujammel Hossain Friend's Club', shared that, they have various activities like Night School(for illiterate young), Meritorious Students Reception, Cultural program, Islamic Cultural program, Sports, Picnic, if tar party, Boat ride, Relief distribution all happens through their organization. During Covid-19 they provide masks, sanitizer and carried out awareness activities.

Involvement in development projects Foyez Miah (37) from the Sagorkuna organization shared his thought, that each organization has a good relationship with the local government. During many programs of our organization, we cordially invite them, and they also respond. The local administration calls us for any government work like the construction of roads, bridges, culverts, or the implementation of any project. We sincerely try to help because the implementation of the project will benefit the people of our village. In the study village, both the organization from four corners are involved in the development and reconstruction of roads and culverts inside the village.

4.3 Creating and maintaining the educational institutions

The organization offers a 6-month free course for illiterate people. Already 30 batches have completed their 6-month long course in night school. So it can be considered an institution. Abdul Karim (45) said students that who currently stay in many European countries, when they phone us, respectfully thanked us for the help. Besides, we have instruments for music, we try to figure out the latent talent of our village children. They perform on several national days programs.

4.4 Complaints and reporting of cases:

There was no evidence of physical punishments. In all areas, it is common for dispute resolvers to consider the economic situation of the losing party when deciding on compensation and payment method. One of the offenders was fined Taka 5 lakh for assaulting a female. Voluntary associations are important and active in alternatives to dispute resolutions. Alternative dispute resolution procedure ensures justice and makes efficient people. In-state societies we have seen the associations like pre-Industrial society,

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