SAFERWORLD

Human security in Bangladesh

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Acronyms

ACC	Anti-Corruption Commission
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADR	Alternative dispute resolution
BCL	Bangladesh Chhatra League
BDR	Bangladesh Rifles
BHSA2005	The Bangladesh Human Security Assessment 2005
BIISS	The Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies
BLAST	Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust
BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
CHT	Chittagong Hill Tracts
CIVPOL	Civilian Police
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DGFI	Directorate General of Forces Intelligence
DNC	Department of Narcotics Control
ICS	Islami Chhatra Shibir
JCD	Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal
JMB	Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NFPS	National Forum for Peace and Security
NSI	National Security Intelligence
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCJSS	Parbattya Chattagram Jana Shanghati Shamiti
PRP	Police Reform Programme
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PSC	Private security company
RAB	Rapid Action Battalion
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SALW	Small arms and light weapons
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VDP	Village Defence Party

Executive summary

THIS REPORT PRESENTS the findings of field research, undertaken throughout Bangladesh between September and December 2007, into human security, community safety and armed violence.

Information included in this survey was gathered using five methods:

- **Household survey**. Using a random (probability) sampling technique, a series of questions were asked to members of 2,000 households. This national survey was designed to provide a representative analysis of perceptions of community insecurity and armed violence in Bangladesh.

- **Focus group discussions**. Ten focus group discussions were conducted during the field research in Savar, Dhaka, Jessore, Bagerhat, Tetulia (Panchagarh), Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Sylhet and Sunamganj.

- **Media survey**. The analysis drew upon reports containing particular key-words from a selection of nine newspapers (Bangla: *Protham Alo*; *Janakantha*; *Daily Jugantor*; *Manabjamin*; *Samakal*; *Bangladesh 2000*. English: *Daily Star*; *News Today*; *New Age*) for a one-year period between 1 October 2006 and 30 September 2007.

- **Key informant interviews**. Over 45 interviews were conducted with a broad cross-section of stakeholders from government and civil society.

- **Desk research**. Government statistics and a variety of secondary sources were analysed.

More detailed information on the methodology can be found in the relevant annexes at the end of the report.

Key dimensions of human security in Bangladesh

There is no internationally agreed definition of 'human security'. As a consequence, this report adopts a flexible definition: 'human security is achieved when the vital core of all human lives is safeguarded from critical pervasive threats, in a way that is consistent with long-term human fulfilment'.[1] This encompasses both 'freedom from want' and 'freedom from fear', but allows researchers to identify how individuals and communities understand their own security. This is because **it is not appropriate to conceive of security solely in terms of crime and justice or basic needs**.

This research identifies eight categories of human security in Bangladesh. Four of these are largely concerned with 'freedom from want'; the others with 'freedom from

1 Adapted from Alkire S, *A Conceptual Framework for Human Security*, Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, (University of Oxford, 2003).

fear'. It should be noted, however, that this grouping is not precise, and there are many links across categories:

■ Freedom from want: economic security; health security; food security; and environmental security.

■ Freedom from fear: personal security; security from misuse of drugs and alcohol; tenure security; and political security.

The majority of Bangladeshis **perceive 'freedom from want' issues as having the largest impact on their daily security.** In the household survey, people were first asked which social issues were the biggest problems. The most common answers were poverty (69 percent) and unemployment (65 percent), closely followed by provision of utilities (56 percent) and vulnerability to natural disasters (51 percent). It should be noted that in this report, the term 'poverty' is used to refer to both quantitative and qualitative deprivation. By contrast, elements of insecurity which could be classified as 'freedom from fear' (for example, crime, extortion, availability of firearms) came further down the list, with crime rating as one of the five main concerns of about one-third of Bangladeshis.

People were then asked more precisely what makes them feel insecure. Natural disasters were the most common concern (53 percent), followed closely by a lack of healthcare (48 percent). The third most popular answer was a perceived increase in crime (28 percent), and fourth was drug abuse (23 percent). Worries about natural disasters are a much greater concern in rural areas than in urban areas, where the two most frequent responses are crime and drug abuse.

Freedom from want

Three main forms of **economic insecurity** were identified: general poverty, economic exploitation and 'price hikes' in basic commodities. With 50 percent of Bangladeshis living below the poverty line, poverty and unemployment are the greatest concerns for most people. **Poverty underlies many other problems**. It is a major cause of food insecurity, since many people lack the resources (including land and agricultural products) either to grow their own food or to buy it from others. Limited resources make it harder to access basic services such as healthcare, sanitation and education. Poverty and unemployment are also seen as being the two most important drivers of crime and injustice.

Some Bangladeshis felt that as they work for low pay – often in poor conditions – they were victims of **economic exploitation**. This was a particular concern for a number of focus group participants working in tea cultivation, stone supplying and the ready-made garment industry. Participants also suggested that particular NGOs running micro-finance initiatives were also guilty of exploitation, citing cases of people spiralling into debt as a result of borrowing money from a succession of different NGOs in order to pay off earlier loans.

The '**price hike**' in the cost of basic goods such as rice, fertiliser and fuel in late 2007 and early 2008 had many causes, several of which were beyond the Government's control, but this was a considerable source of insecurity for much of the population. Like all sources of insecurity, threats to economic stability cannot be analysed in isolation. For example, soaring costs of basic foodstuffs can lead to food insecurity, as households may struggle to purchase sufficient stocks to live healthy lives. This, in turn, can further deepen economic insecurity by limiting productivity at a personal or community level.

Poor **health security** includes the risk of poverty-related health problems, the spread of infectious diseases, and low standards of healthcare provision. Poor health is a threat to human security because it undermines social and economic development. There has been significant investment in healthcare in recent years, and most health

indicators are improving. However, 30 percent of the population are still below minimum levels for dietary energy consumption, infant mortality remains high (54 for every 1,000 live births in 2005), and various infectious diseases, such as pneumonia and tuberculosis, are still rife. Moreover, avian influenza is disrupting farming and animal husbandry, which will further weaken food security and economic development. Accidents and injuries (including high numbers of road accidents) are also a major cause of health problems.

Another key factor influencing standards of healthcare is the sensitive topic of **population levels**. Although fertility rates are falling, the population is still growing rapidly; the impact of this is multidimensional, but specifically large numbers of children being born into poverty make it difficult to improve the overall percentage of people enjoying basic health security. Having a growing population also intensifies other categories of insecurity, as it generates increased pressure on land and infrastructure resources. In turn, intense competition for resources is a key factor in creating both tenure insecurity and wider social instability. Indeed, several key informants suggested that Bangladesh suffers from 'over-population'.

Food insecurity is a major problem, with nearly 40 percent of survey respondents listing insufficient food among their greatest concerns. Stability of food supplies is also a challenge: 14 percent said that seasonal or chronic food insecurity was a major cause of overall insecurity (16 percent in rural areas). Food security is closely linked to environmental security: natural disasters destroy large quantities of food and severely disrupt agricultural production, while environmental degradation can reduce the long-term productivity of land.

Four main threats were identified as relating to **environmental security**: natural disasters, riverbank erosion, pressure on resources, and climate change. **Natural disasters** were the most frequently cited cause of insecurity (53 percent of respondents: 58 percent in rural areas, compared to 37 percent in urban areas). The most damaging disasters are cyclones and floods; over the last century, cyclones (including Cyclone Sidr in 2007) have killed hundreds of thousands of people in Bangladesh, while floods have affected the lives and livelihoods of many more.

Each year, some 10,000 hectares of land are lost to **riverbank erosion**, which leads directly or indirectly to displacement, death or injury, and the disruption of economic production, education, communications, and sanitation facilities. Affected households are often displaced several times, moving from one disaster-prone area to another. The stress of displacement can also have a negative impact on families: producing increased domestic disputes (and even violence), and causing the disintegration of a family unit because of forced labour migration.

High demand and poor management have created considerable **pressure on natural resources** such as land, woodland and water resources. This is caused by a number of factors, including: high population levels; low agricultural productivity; the large proportion of people engaged in subsistence agriculture; riverbank erosion; change of land use; climate change; and tenure insecurity. Competition for resources is therefore a major cause of conflict (sometimes violent) in society.

Climate change is expected to have an intensely damaging affect on Bangladesh. Natural disasters may occur even more frequently and be greater in magnitude. A rise in sea levels could submerge a significant proportion of the country. Climate change will thus not only cause environmental destruction, but **will also drive massive social changes** as millions of people migrate from devastated areas. This would further over-stretch inadequate infrastructure and governance mechanisms, and could lead both to a collapse in living standards and an increase in social disorder.

**Freedom from fear:
personal security, crime
and armed violence**

When asked specifically about the most frequent crimes and injustices in Bangladesh, more than three-quarters (77 percent) thought that **personal property crimes (for example, theft, burglary, robbery, mugging) were the most common problem**. This perception was even greater among urban respondents (89 percent). The second-highest cause of concern was dowry-related crime (56 percent). Other gender-related forms of insecurity included sexual violence and harassment (21 percent) and domestic violence (11 percent). Disputes over properties were the third most frequently-cited form of crime/injustice (35 percent); a perception which was further supported by fears over land-grabbing and landlessness (15 percent) and slum evictions (4 percent). Drug abuse was the fourth most popular response (29 percent). Other forms of personal insecurity relating to violent crime, such as physical violence by strangers, violence using firearms and murder were a priority problem for between eight and thirteen percent of respondents. Approximately ten percent reported political violence as a main concern.

Just under two-fifths (38 percent) of households have experienced crime or injustice in the past two years. Theft was the most common crime identified; respondents reported 346 instances of theft over the survey period. This means that on average 8.65 percent of households experience a theft each year. It is notable that this disaggregation of respondent experiences does not correspond with even the highest rate of recorded theft in 2007. Police statistics recorded only 12,015 thefts for a country of at least 20 million households – a rate of one theft per 0.06 percent of households each year. This suggests that **the vast majority of crimes go unreported**. Other crimes identified included damage to property, threat of physical violence, loss of property to land-grabbers, muggings, and physical violence by husbands against wives.

In all, 234 acts of violence were reported across the 2,000 surveyed households for the two year period prior to the conducting of field research. Of these just 22 incidents involved firearms; misuse of sticks and knives is more common. While this could indicate that there are **low levels of weapons proliferation** within society, there is substantive evidence to indicate that **firearms and explosives are a pervasive threat to security**. For example, several thousand weapons have been seized by the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) since its establishment, implying that criminals have easy access to illegal weapons. Moreover, frequent seizures of explosives are also made. Between October 2006 and January 2007 nearly 200 people were injured by improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The availability of firearms and explosives is likely due to Bangladesh's geographical location, making it easy to use as an international trafficking route.

Organised criminal groups are involved in the smuggling and trafficking of arms, drugs, and human beings. This is a particular concern in Khulna Division. Some women become involved in smuggling through poverty: they begin with cheap goods such as saris and then can move on to drugs or weapons. *Mastaani* ('musclemen') are also a major problem: virtually ubiquitous in slum areas, they rule by extortion and controlling access to services. Their well-established power bases leave the state powerless to address the problem effectively.

Crime has an impact on people's lives, but for most it is not a severe problem. However, about 20 percent of the survey respondents said that crime had a 'medium' to 'severe' impact on their lives. On average, crime has a slightly higher impact on the lives of women, non-Muslims and non-Bengalis. The perceived negative impact of crime was higher in urban areas and in those households that have been the victims of crime.

Results from both the household survey and key informant interviews reveal that **drug control and drug abuse are widespread concerns**. Several different types of drug are commonly used in Bangladesh, including phensidyl, heroin, marijuana, and 'yaba' (a mixture of methamphetamine and caffeine, originating principally in Myanmar (Burma)). Drug addiction is a particularly big risk among street children and in

slum areas, though richer sections of society also use drugs, particularly yaba. Drug addiction impacts on both 'freedom from fear' and 'freedom from want'. For example, drug addiction is a notable health problem as users do not always fully understand the potential dangers involved such as the greater risk of contracting HIV and other diseases. Moreover drug users are often forced to turn to crime in order to fund their habits.

Tenure insecurity relates to the threat of loss of land through land-grabbing, eviction, natural disasters, and landlessness. Several factors contribute to this form of insecurity: a weak and unstable system of property rights; a slow and corrupt legal system; political corruption; ever-growing population density; and the lack of a proper system of land use and spatial planning.

Tenure insecurity poses a considerable threat to security in Bangladesh. It can be both a **cause of physical violence**, as well as a **source of economic and social underdevelopment**. Many of the poorest in society are denied access to common resources (*khas*, 'land' and *haor*, 'waters') which may be essential for their livelihood. Furthermore, it is difficult to use land as an asset, and there is less incentive to make long-term investments to increase its productivity. A large proportion of cases in the civil courts relate to property disputes, which may drag on for many years. The lack of effective dispute resolution mechanisms means that families often take matters into their own hands; it is therefore not uncommon for land disputes to lead to violence. Such disputes may also act as a catalyst for conflict between different groups. Moreover, the slow litigation process is a major drain on resources, because of the expense of legal fees and the loss of income resulting from having to spend time away from work.

In terms of political security, the research highlighted the fact that **the political system is unstable** and poses a consistent threat to security. Competition between parties has often resulted in instances of 'direct' political violence, examples of which include: violence around elections, clashes between party activists, and violence related to *hartals* (politically motivated strikes). As a consequence, most elections in Bangladesh have led to protests and clashes between rival supporters. For example, between October and December 2006, nearly 7,000 people were injured and at least 134 were killed in clashes sparked by a political stand-off between the main parties in the run-up to planned elections. This violence deepened the political crisis which led to the establishment of a new Caretaker Government and the imposition of a state of emergency.

Political insecurity affects human security in a number of ways, for example, individuals and communities fear violence and an uncertain future at times of political instability while *hartals* damage the economy and disrupt education. Politically motivated violence also poisons the political atmosphere, and undermines democracy and peaceful decision-making.

The higher education system is also highly politicised, and many university students are forced into contact with the student wings of political parties. There are often battles between different student groups, disrupting tertiary education.

Peaceful democratic processes are further undermined by **terrorism and extremism**. Islamist terrorism has been a major concern since the detonation of 459 bombs in about 300 locations by *Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh* (JMB) on 17 August 2005. This led to a major police operation, and 233 court cases had been prepared by November 2007. The Government of Bangladesh is actively engaged in countering this activity. To this end, intelligence capacity has been strengthened, investigations of extremist activity intensified, and several Islamist groups have been shut down. The Government is also moving to gain more control over madrasah education, which has previously been unregulated. There is concern that madrasah education is not sufficiently vocational, and that unemployed madrasah graduates are easy targets for extremist ideologues. However, it is important not to exaggerate the threat of Islamist terrorism, nor to equate growing religiosity with extremist thought. It is notable that

terrorism was barely mentioned as a concern by Bangladeshis in either the household survey or focus group discussions.

Community security in the Chittagong Hill Tracts is also a concern. As well as prolonging insecurity in the region (through fear of renewed violence and tenure insecurity), stationing large numbers of military and other security personnel in the region is a drain on much-needed resources. The situation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts also complicates border management, with implications for drugs control, arms control and the prevention of terrorism.

Gender was also found to be an important dimension of human security in Bangladesh. In general, **women report a higher degree of concern than men about most forms of insecurity**. Women are also particularly concerned by gender-based violence such as dowry-related violence, domestic violence and sexual harassment. Men are more likely to report incidents that occur in the public domain (such as physical violence, damage to property, land grabbing, mugging and corruption).

Perceptions of insecurity also affect people's mobility. While the vast majority think that it is safe for women to move about freely during the day, at night women feel much less secure: **only 21 percent of urban and 39 percent of rural women feel 'fully secure' at night**. Most feel 'partially secure', though urban women are nonetheless more likely to move around at night. Of the women surveyed, 35 percent only go out at night once a month and 16 percent never leave home during the hours of darkness.

Several forms of insecurity are strongly gender-related, including dowry-related crime, domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, and human trafficking. **Dowry-related violence** is the most common form of **domestic violence**, and one of the most widespread – and sensitive – forms of insecurity in Bangladesh. The idea of dowry often mutates from a one-off payment into an ongoing 'debt' which may prove to be impossible to clear. Social taboos mean that most women suffer dowry-related violence in silence. This may explain why 64 percent of household survey respondents believed that dowry-related crime is very common in their locality, yet only 2.7 percent actually reported having to make a dowry payment. Successive governments have promised to end dowry-related violence, but social attitudes remain largely unchanged. Dowry-related violence can be reduced only by addressing underlying social attitudes, including the taboo around domestic violence.

Women and girls also have to deal with **sexual harassment ('Eve-teasing')**, ranging from lewd comments through to sexual violence. Among the respondents, 21 percent of rural and 30 percent of urban women said that sexual harassment was among their biggest concerns. Sexual harassment of female family members is also a major concern for many men.

Other threats to women and girls include rape and human trafficking. It is believed that **most women who have been raped do not report it to anyone**, even within their family. If they do so, they run the risk of becoming double victims: first as a victim of the rape itself, and then as a victim of social stigma. Women also fear that the police will not take their case seriously or will treat them insensitively.

There are few clear statistics on the scale of **human trafficking**, but it is thought to be a major problem, especially in border areas. Poor women are often lured by promises of foreign employment, not realising that they are likely to end up working in a brothel. Some women try to escape, but many are trapped because of the social shame involved in returning to one's community.

The household survey identified several **vulnerable groups** that were seen to be most at risk of insecurity. **The poorest households are the most vulnerable** because they lack any resources or influence to protect their interests. Within this group, households with no adult males are particularly vulnerable as they generally suffer from acute poverty, and are socially marginalised. Other vulnerable groups include ethnic

and religious minorities, displaced peoples (Biharis and Rohingyas), slum dwellers, border communities, and people living in remote areas (such as *char* islands) or regions which are particularly susceptible to natural disasters.

The research also analyses the **role of the state in maintaining security**. The state has both a 'preventive' and a 'reactive' role to play in maintaining human security. It must create an **enabling environment** which allows citizens to meet their basic needs, as well as prevent security threats from arising. However, **the state must also react adequately to security threats** that do occur.

Survey respondents were asked **which institutions provide security** in relation to 'freedom from fear'. The five most popular answers were education institutions (43 percent), NGOs/micro-finance institutions (34 percent), police stations (28 percent), Union Parishads/municipalities (28 percent) and hospitals/healthcare facilities (20 percent). These results show that Bangladeshis understand human security to be about much more than crime and justice.

Respondents reported that **security has improved significantly under the Caretaker Government** – over 90 percent said there had been a reduction in crime and violence, and only three percent thought that things had got worse (43 percent said there was a lot less crime and violence compared to one year ago, 51 percent a little less). All criminal justice sector institutions are perceived to be more effective now than they were two years ago.

When comparing different government institutions and agencies, **the public places most trust in the RAB**. Over 95 percent of the household survey respondents believe the RAB to be at least moderately active, and over 70 percent say that it is very active. The RAB is perceived as a good initiative by 97 percent of respondents, while 96 percent believe that it is responsible for an improvement in law and order. The RAB has, however, attracted controversy in some quarters because of the number of people who have died in 'encounter' exchanges of fire (popularly known as 'crossfire'). The RAB counters that these deaths were unavoidable and that everyone involved was a serious criminal suspect. Despite the contentious nature of these killings, the continuing popularity of the RAB suggests that the general public values what they perceive as effective security provision more highly than considerations of restraint and accountability. Nonetheless, some key informants questioned whether the RAB is a long-term solution to Bangladesh's problems with crime and law and order, suggesting that the Government really needs to address the *causes* of crime and insecurity.

There is also **growing support for the police**. Respondents perceived the police to have become much more active over the last two years. Although only 5 percent of survey respondents stated that they are 'very respectful of the police', 80 percent considered themselves to be 'respectful' or 'moderately respectful'. Only 15 percent said that they did not respect the police at all. Some criticisms were levelled at the police by interviewees: that they are ineffective; that they are insensitive to victims and to the general public; that they are financially corrupt; and that they follow political orders rather than upholding the law equally for everyone. However, most people believe that the police are now improving their performance.

There are two key reasons for this. Firstly, since the Caretaker Government took control in January 2007 the police have been free from political interference, and are therefore perceived to act in a more appropriate manner. Secondly, the opportunity now exists for genuine police reform. Senior police officers have already overseen the implementation of various changes, supported by the Police Reform Programme, and there is great scope for further reform.

For most people, **access to justice is limited** by corruption, political interference, restrictions on legal aid and a huge backlog of cases. While there has been some reform of the justice system in recent months – particularly the separation of the lower judiciary from the executive – on the whole, the pace of judicial reform has been slow,

and much remains to be done. In light of this, alternative dispute resolution (ADR) is being increasingly promoted as a means of enabling greater local access to justice. Consequently, while violent crimes such as murder are likely to continue to go through the official justice system, non-formal mechanisms may provide a more effective and accessible form of justice for civil disputes within communities.

Local government also has an important role to play in human security, particularly at the level of the Union Parishad (a tier of local government in Bangladesh). People are most likely to go to local representatives such as the Union Parishad chair, the Ward Commissioner or their local MP in order to deal with most problems, including those relating to crime and justice. Union Parishad members act as a bridge between the formal and the informal justice systems through their participation in *shalishi* (see below) and village courts. Overall, however, local government is very weak and under-resourced. This is a major problem for human security, because many issues are essentially local in nature and are best dealt with at the local level. This shortcoming is felt in many areas that affect human security, such as the environment, food security, policing and land management. The Caretaker Government has developed proposals to reinvigorate local government, but it remains unclear what effect this initiative will have on security provision in the long-term.

Many communities have little confidence that the state will provide for their security. This leads them to adopt **non-formal security mechanisms** for crime prevention, and access to justice. Individuals may take steps to avoid falling victim to crime in various ways, both by seeking to avoid potentially risky situations and by taking measures to deter crime. It is more common, however, for crime deterrence initiatives to be implemented at the community level. A good example are neighbourhood watch schemes (*gram pahara*) whereby the men of the village take turns to police the area and guard against 'bandits'. Some 27 percent of respondents were aware of such a scheme in their area; neighbourhood watch programmes are much more common in urban locations (43 percent) than in rural areas (22 percent). People who had heard of such initiatives were very positive about them: 97 percent said that they were at least moderately effective. These 'self-policing' mechanisms are popular, but they do not always respect the rule of law. Moreover, they are largely deterrent in nature, and often do little to address the underlying insecurities faced by local communities.

The majority of people also prefer local and traditional forms of justice, particularly for civil disputes such as family and property matters. The *shalishi*, an informal mediation process usually chaired by local leaders, is the most popular institution for dispute resolution. 36 percent of respondents said they would prefer to go to *shalishi*, compared to the 35 percent who favoured the formal courts and 26 percent who would use the Village Courts (which have semi-formal status and can try small disputes). NGOs have also begun to offer dispute resolution services, but these are much less widely known. Only 27 percent of people said they were aware of NGO justice mechanisms, and only 3 percent had contacted them. This compares to 97 percent who were aware of *shalishi* and 17 percent who had contacted a village or slum *shalishi* to resolve a problem. Of those who had been in contact with a *shalishi*, 93 percent were satisfied that they had received justice.

These traditional mechanisms have their failings. *Shalishi* councils are normally formed from local elites and can therefore reflect the specific interests of interested parties. It is also rare for women, minorities and those of lower socio-economic class to sit on a *shalishi* council, which may further bias judgments. Punishments may be extreme or not in keeping with formal law. Nevertheless, they clearly play a major role in maintaining peace and security quickly and effectively.

There are few NGOs engaged on issues relating to 'freedom from fear', such as community security or policing. NGOs and international agencies are more active in addressing 'freedom from want' through major programmes in education, healthcare,

poverty reduction and environmental protection. It should also be noted that the private security industry is growing.

Links between different forms of insecurity

Overall, the level of insecurity relating to 'freedom from fear' is perceived as being relatively low compared to 'freedom from want'. Bangladeshis consider issues such as poverty, employment, food security and health to be much greater concerns than crime.

There are, however, many linkages between insecurities relating to 'freedom from want' and those relating to 'freedom from fear'. Economic insecurity and poverty are seen as key causes of crime, and may also contribute to political instability through concern over price hikes, economic exploitation or austerity measures. Environmental problems such as natural disasters and riverbank erosion fuel tenure insecurity. Meanwhile, 'freedom from fear' insecurities have the potential to significantly undermine 'freedom from want' and economic and social development measures. Political instability and violence disrupt the economy and hinder education. Tenure insecurity means there is less incentive or opportunity to use land as an asset or increase productivity.

Since many insecurities and their causes are interlinked, the responses to these problems will also need to be better co-ordinated. **Development and security actors need to be more aware of how their fields interact.**

Conclusion

Despite the improvement in security in 2007, **there are several reasons to expect that further insecurity lies ahead**. The current situation is extremely unusual and is unlikely to be representative of long-term trends. Although there is strong support for reform in many circles, there is as yet little evidence that the main political parties are truly committed to reforming the state security and justice sectors. Without political leadership, long-term reform will remain difficult, if not impossible. There is also a considerable risk of instability in the period around the elections scheduled for the end of 2008.

There is an assumption that because Bangladesh does not have a recent history of violent conflict (with the exception of the uneasy peace in the Chittagong Hill Tracts) and is not obviously overwhelmed by criminal gangs or terrorists, then 'security' is not a major issue. Certainly it is true that the security situation is better than that in many other countries with similar levels of development. Yet this should not give rise to complacency, as it is certainly easier and more humane to invest in a preventative approach than to deal with security crises and their aftermath. **There is a significant risk that progress on economic and social development could be derailed by political and criminal insecurities**.

This research finds that **political insecurity lies at the heart of many human security challenges in Bangladesh**. Not only does factional political competition trigger violent clashes between activists and triggers *hartals*; it also politicises many aspects of life and fuels a range of other insecurities. These include the threat of violence and instability in higher education; the fear that property will be appropriated by those with strong political connections; and the lowering of standards in the civil service, with public sector positions filled on the basis of political expediency rather than merit. More generally, attention that is paid by politicians to factional competition detracts from the amount of attention that can be paid to governing the country. Political insecurity is thus also a 'passive' cause of insecurity in that it makes it less likely that other insecurities will be adequately addressed by the state.

Additionally, while it is true that a stronger economy will give more people 'freedom from want' and will provide more resources for the criminal justice system, the security situation is unlikely to improve automatically as a result. It might even be

that economic development can generate insecurity, particularly if it requires painful short-term adjustments which hurt the poor (as many market reforms do), or if the benefits of development are deemed to be unevenly distributed. Economic development may also cause profound social changes on both a personal and a societal level that could create insecurity in unpredictable ways. This is not, of course, to argue against economic development; but it should be borne in mind that an improved sense of security and 'freedom from fear' will require a serious multidimensional commitment to, and investment in, reforms, including of security sector institutions.

In some ways, this contradiction between relatively low levels of public concern about security and worrying underlying trends is symptomatic of the wider picture within Bangladesh. Of course, this apparent public apathy may simply reflect people's preoccupation with the much more pressing concerns of fulfilling their basic daily needs. But it may be that the relatively low levels of reported insecurity arise because certain issues which would be considered crimes or causes of insecurity by external observers are not readily perceived as such by most Bangladeshis. Certain forms of insecurity may in fact be 'internalised' and thus not recognised as insecurities.

Recommendations

This section summarises many of the ideas that are considered necessary to strengthen human security in Bangladesh. Given the scope of the topic, it is clearly impractical to provide detailed recommendations on how to address every identifiable human security issue; instead, this section defines the main areas which need to be addressed. However, it is acknowledged at the outset that human security is a vast and complicated field, and there are no 'quick fixes' to long-term security problems.

A number of broad recommendations based on the research can be identified. These have been grouped into a number of categories: achieving an integrated approach to human security; creating bottom-up demand for human security; police reform and access to justice; insecurity around elections; opening up the democratic space; and other thematic areas.

A joined-up approach to strengthening human security

One of the key arguments of this paper is that there are strong linkages between different forms of human (in)security. In order to strengthen human security, therefore, greater awareness is required of how different forms of insecurity are related, and policy responses need to involve a wider range of actors. The following broad steps are recommended:

- **A long-term strategy for human security**. It is not realistic for the state to develop an overarching 'human security strategy', as this would most likely be a complicated, unwieldy and ineffective document. Nonetheless, decision-makers need to have a coherent vision of how they intend to strengthen human security. This would begin with a better understanding of the linkages between different security challenges, the linkages between sectors, and the roles of different agencies in addressing human security problems. On this basis, a broad blueprint could be drawn up of the reforms required across government to improve human security.

- **Moving from reaction towards prevention**. Another key argument of the report is that policy-making in many areas of human security, from policing through to environmental security, has largely been reactive in nature. Policy-making needs to become more proactive, attempting to identify the drivers and causes of insecurity, and developing long-term solutions to address insecurities rather than simply responding to problems as they arise.

- **Cross-governmental approaches**. This report argues that there are often strong overlaps between different forms of insecurity, with the root causes of one type of insecurity (for example, tenure insecurity) also linked to other themes in human security

(judicial reform, environmental security, etc.). This can in turn generate new insecurities (such as violent conflict over land). Adequately addressing these complex problems over the long term will require an integrated response across different sectors and government departments, whereby decision-makers and officials move away from narrow policy measures focused on their own department, and towards cross-governmental policy approaches. Therefore, development actors need to be more aware of the importance of security, especially in light of the political instability of late 2006 and early 2007; likewise, security actors need not only to consider security from traditional law and order and national security perspectives, but also to assess how security sector agencies can best contribute to improved *human* security.

■ **Linking up the security sector**. At present, it seems that the relationships between the various official security sector agencies are often unclear, with no firm delineation of respective roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, inter-agency co-ordination often depends more on informal co-operation than on formal mechanisms. Similarly, formal and non-formal methods of policing and justice largely exist in parallel rather than being linked together. Non-formal security mechanisms do not need to be 'officially' recognised by the state or brought into the state security sector; however, given the state's current lack of capacity to rapidly expand security provision across the country, non-formal mechanisms remain necessary. Attention should thus focus on how the potential of these non-formal mechanisms can best be exploited (and their downsides limited). This would also take pressure off the official criminal justice system.

■ **Improved capacity for policy-making**. Studies of governance in Bangladesh regularly identify gaps in policy-making, such as top-heavy decision-making, inadequate data on which to base policy, and a lack of capacity for policy analysis. As a first step, relevant agencies need to establish or strengthen their policy research divisions.

■ **Value human security as central to development**. In recent years, the Government of Bangladesh and the international donor community have both concentrated their efforts on economic development, poverty reduction, healthcare and education. All of these areas are crucial, and as this report shows, they are also central to the human security priorities of most Bangladeshis. However, on the whole, 'security' is not seen as a key development priority. This marginalisation clearly devalues the effectiveness of development: for as shown, issues associated with 'freedom from want' are often interlinked with those of 'freedom from fear', and vice-versa. Therefore, the right to live safe and secure lives is just as central to human happiness as other aspects of development. As a consequence, human security concerns (stretching across both 'freedom from want' and 'freedom from fear') need to be adequately addressed in development frameworks.

Creating bottom-up demand for improved security

Top-down reforms of the official security sector, however necessary they may be, can only achieve so much. To date, reforms in Bangladesh have often stalled, owing to a political system held back by negative confrontation and a tendency to favour special interest groups; an outcome greatly enabled by weaknesses in civil society. Instituting government reforms alone will not address this situation effectively. It requires all actors to change their attitudes towards governance. For example, the introduction of community-based policing within the Police Reform Programme requires a change of attitudes not only from the police, but also from the communities they serve.

■ **Bangladeshi non-governmental organisations should take a leading role in promoting community security**. This report has found that few NGOs are currently engaged on issues directly relevant to 'freedom from fear'. In general, action to strengthen the capacity of communities to address their local security problems cannot be taken by government alone. Small, grassroots and community organisations need to have the skills and the confidence to mobilise on human security issues. Some

of Bangladesh's larger NGOs could therefore provide support and capacity-building to local communities on how to develop community security initiatives.

■ **Empower disadvantaged communities**. In the focus group discussions in particular, it was found that many communities across the country feel isolated and powerless. They have little awareness of their rights and lack mechanisms to voice their concerns. Again, civil society organisations can play a fundamental role in supporting disadvantaged communities by raising awareness of rights, social justice and legal protection. They can also help communities to build networks and coalitions to promote their interests more effectively (which may be a precursor to, or a part of, community security initiatives).

Over the long term, small-scale initiatives to develop grassroots engagement in the provision of human security may have as much effect as centrally-driven reforms sponsored by the main security agencies – particularly since many security problems are local in nature and will require locally-owned solutions. The following steps are recommended:

■ **Pilot community-based policing initiatives**. There is great potential for small community security initiatives to unite the public and local authorities in the development of local crime prevention measures. This is a relatively new concept; currently, there are only two pilot programmes in Bangladesh, run by the Police Reform Programme and the Asia Foundation. More community security initiatives should be piloted in different areas of the country, drawing upon the successes and lessons learnt from these original projects. This could lead to a more widespread 'roll-out' of such initiatives in the future.

Opening up the democratic space

One of the long-term solutions to strengthening human security is to open up democratic space, allowing everybody greater opportunities to engage in the formulation and implementation of human security policies. Priorities in this field include:

■ **Strengthen local government**. The Committee on the Strengthening of Local Government has proposed a number of measures to reinvigorate local government. Improved local government would have a huge impact on human security, since many security matters are local in nature and can best be addressed by local communities acting on local knowledge and understanding. Future reforms of local government should accord due emphasis to a real devolution of power, rather than simply rearranging existing structures. Local structures need to be given more authority to make and implement policy on local-level human security measures, and should also be given greater opportunities to contribute to central policy-making on security. The Local Government Commission should have the authority to monitor the division of responsibilities between central and local government in security and justice provision.

■ **Tackle gender-related insecurity**. Gender-based (in)security is a cause for concern in Bangladesh, for it is evident that women are underrepresented in the policy-making process, and that they generally feel more vulnerable to concerns relating to 'freedom from fear'. Gender sensitivity should therefore be incorporated into democratic reforms so that the concerns of both men and women are equally represented. Many reforms could be made to address gender-related violence more effectively. These include:

  ■ increasing the number of women police officers, judges and other security officials;

  ■ better training of police officers and court officials on how to investigate sexual violence (particularly rape) more sensitively;

  ■ ensuring that victims of domestic and/or sexual violence can count on appropriate psychological and financial support structures, without which many women will not report this violence for fear of social ostracism and loss of means of support;

■ large-scale social programmes to raise awareness of how to combat domestic and dowry-related violence, and to reduce the social taboo against discussing such matters.

Measures also need to be developed to deal with the insecurity faced by female-headed households.

■ **Ensure freedom of the press and protect journalists from attacks**. A strong and independent press plays a fundamental role in sharing knowledge and generating ideas. The Caretaker Government and all political parties should commit to protecting journalists from the threat of attack, and to investigating any such attacks with appropriate diligence. Laws should be amended to reduce the frequency with which journalists are taken to court by politicians on libel or defamation charges.

■ **Promote the use of community radio**. Radio is a cheap and easy-to-use medium. Local community (talk) radio stations would provide ordinary citizens with an opportunity to raise their concerns. These could be very useful as an informal public consultation mechanism which would allow decision-makers and the general public to share information and ideas. Laws should be passed to provide airspace for community radio stations and make it as easy as possible to establish them.

Insecurity around elections

As Bangladesh moves closer to the general election – planned for the end of 2008 – there is an increased potential for insecurity, as confrontation between political parties could result in violence. Various measures can be undertaken to reduce this risk:

■ **Return of democratic governance**. It is important that the planned elections are held in a fair and transparent manner. This will allow the newly-elected Parliament to endorse the reforms already commissioned by the Caretaker Government, and facilitate the effective implementation of an integrated approach to strengthening human security. The staging of the 2008 elections will partly depend on the present Caretaker Government strengthening stability by continuing to support electoral reforms, and on the two main political parties ensuring that they campaign in a positive and peaceful manner.

■ **Continued support for electoral reform**. The Election Commission is currently undertaking a major overhaul of the electoral system, in particular through the updating of voter lists. It is hoped that these reforms will make the election more transparent and accountable, thus reducing the scope for electoral fraud and limiting the potential for violence and protests over 'foul play'. The international community is providing significant resources to support this process. However, it is a very major undertaking, and ongoing support is required in order to ensure that these reforms are completed and embedded in time for the elections to take place successfully at the end of 2008.

■ **Community-based planning of election-related security measures**. In conjunction with top-down approaches to electoral reform, local and national-level forums should be set up to encourage co-operation in identifying potential sources and forms of insecurity before, during and after the elections, and to design appropriate responses. These forums should be as inclusive as possible, involving local community leaders, representatives of the main political parties, the security agencies (the police, the RAB, and the Armed Forces), civil society organisations, local government authorities, and, where appropriate, representatives of the international community.

■ **Commitment to non-violence**. All political parties should make a firm political commitment to reject all forms of violence during the election period, and to prevent any of their representatives from engaging in violent protest. Public awareness of the negative impact of electoral violence also needs to be raised.

Police reform and access to justice

Major reforms of the police are currently being planned and implemented under the Police Reform Programme. There has also been a significant step forward in judicial reform with the Government's separation of the judiciary from the executive. It is essential to build on these foundations and ensure that reforms continue, regardless of expected political changes in late 2008. Recommendations include:

■ **Political commitment to police reform**. All the major parties in Bangladesh should make a firm commitment to police reform, in order to ensure that the current process continues regardless of which party is in government. All parties should also commit themselves to fully respect the independence of the Police Reform Programme and should promise to abandon their former practice of interfering in the work of the police.

■ **Ensure adoption of the new Police Ordinance**. Updating the Police Ordinance 1861 is crucial to the long-term development of the police. A new Police Ordinance has been drafted which provides for the adoption of a modern framework for the functioning of the police force and includes many measures designed to strengthen its operational independence and accountability. The Police Ordinance is expected to be passed in 2008; it is vital that all major stakeholders agree on its importance, and that the provisions contained within the Ordinance are implemented as soon as possible.

■ **Consolidate the separation of the judiciary**. The executive was officially relieved of any control over the functions of the lower judiciary on 1 November 2007. This is a major step forward, but much remains to be done to build on these foundations – not least the practical inauguration of the Judicial Service Commission and the appointment of new judicial magistrates. Many new judges will also need to be trained, and the Supreme Court will need support to be able to discharge its responsibilities more effectively.

■ **Develop a long-term strategy for judicial reform**. The Government currently lacks both a long-term vision for the future of the justice system and a coherent, long-term strategy for reforming the system and resolving the many problems it currently faces – in particular, the backlog of cases and the prevalence of corruption. It is essential that such a strategy is developed, preferably with cross-party backing to ensure that reforms do not fall victim to political confrontation.

■ **Continue work on alternative dispute resolution and mediation**. Over the last few years, the concept of ADR has been encouraged and the idea of mediation has been promoted as a way to resolve cases before they reach court. It is hoped that this could eventually help to make the justice system more efficient and to reduce the existing backlog of cases. Some donor support has been given in this area. This support needs to continue, and the opportunities for the further expansion of ADR should be promoted.

Other thematic areas

As well as the broad areas described above, this report identifies human security issues in many other thematic areas. It is not possible to give detailed proposals for how to address insecurities in each of these fields, but certain key recommendations can be made:

■ **Combating corruption**. The Anti-Corruption Commission has been reinvigorated in recent months, but it could be further strengthened by ensuring its operational independence. This would empower the commission to investigate and eradicate corruption in all sectors. Most government agencies should also develop their own strategies for addressing corruption within their sector, and within their own agency. In addition, Bangladesh's political parties need to increase transparency and tackle institutionalised favouring of special interest groups.

- **Tenure insecurity**. Much greater efforts are required to improve the system of land registration and land use, and to strengthen the protection of property rights.

- **Addressing drug abuse**. Drug abuse has been flagged in this research as a major public concern. High-profile operations to combat drug trafficking were undertaken in early 2008. However, these need to be combined with long-term measures to raise awareness of the risks of drug use and the social problems that it causes, to treat drug addicts, and to reduce the risks that drug users will turn to crime in order to fund their addiction.

- **Reducing political violence in universities**. Many aspects of life in Bangladesh have been subject to undue politicisation. However, the politicisation of university life is a particular cause for concern because of the volatility of student politics and the impact that political disruption has on education. Political parties should make a firm commitment to root out violence within the student wings of their parties and to cut all links with any student group which is proved to be implicated in violence or intimidation. Steps should be undertaken to reduce the grip of political parties on university administration in areas such as the allocation of university accommodation.

- **Counter-terrorism**. As well as continued efforts to combat terrorism through improved intelligence and police work, long-term strategies are needed to counter extremist ideologies. This may include a reinvigoration of Islamic scholarship in Bangladesh and improved regulation of madrasah education (including initiatives to ensure that madrasah education provides people with good employment opportunities). Community initiatives (for example, through madrasah boards, mosques and community leaders) should also be developed, to facilitate local programmes which will complement nationally-adopted counter-terrorism measures.

- **Small arms and light weapons (SALW) control**. An inter-agency co-ordinating body should be established to review existing SALW control policy and procedures, and to identify priorities for addressing illegal SALW proliferation (as well as linkages to other human security problems, such as drug trafficking). This should lead to the development of a national strategy to strengthen SALW control, tailored to the Bangladeshi context, and drawing on the framework of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

- **Climate change and human security**. Greater consideration needs to be given to the relationship between climate change and human security. Over the short term, initiatives should be developed to reassure vulnerable communities about security and crime prevention during and after natural disasters. Over the longer term, greater understanding is required of the human security implications of climate change and the implications for government policy, including in the areas of conflict-sensitive disaster risk reduction and natural disaster management (see also research recommendations below).

- **Protection of vulnerable households in the event of internal displacement**. People should not have to choose between 'freedom from want' and 'freedom from fear'. It is therefore essential that a mechanism be adopted that will comprehensively protect the human security of the most vulnerable.

- **Rights of displaced peoples**. Legal issues surrounding the rights of the Biharis and the Rohingya refugees should be quickly resolved, and greater international support should be provided to improve conditions in the camps where the majority of these people live.

Recommended research

One of the problems faced by researchers investigating human security issues in Bangladesh is the scarcity of reliable information on which to draw. The lack of quality analysis is primarily a problem for the Government, as policy-making decisions are compromised by the absence of comprehensive analysis on which to base initiatives.

Improving the quality of government statistics and strengthening capacity to undertake policy analysis are clearly priorities for the Government of Bangladesh. Possible methods of data collection, collation and analysis could include:

■ **Crime and violence statistics**. There should be clear official guidelines on what information the police, the RAB and other agencies are required to record and publish.

■ **Disaggregating information at the town and community level**. Exclusive reliance on national-level analysis leads to an incomplete understanding of crime and violence. Insecurity differs significantly between locations and communities; information should therefore be recorded in a manner that will enable more comprehensive analysis.

■ **Understanding the nature of crime and violence**. There is a need for more academic research into security trends in different locations. Undertaking several such studies in different parts of the country would also allow for a much more detailed analysis of human security in Bangladesh as a whole.

■ **Perceptions of what constitutes a crime**. The common understanding of 'crime' may differ considerably from formal legal definitions. Further research is required into how different groups understand the concept of 'crime', as this could have significant implications for future research into crime and justice.

■ **Linkages between conventional arms proliferation and insecurity**. There are linkages between illegal arms circulation and other forms of insecurity – particularly political insecurity, terrorism and organised crime. These linkages need to be explored in more detail, though researching such sensitive and complicated issues will be difficult.

■ **The human security of vulnerable groups**. Specific studies are needed into the human security of all vulnerable groups in Bangladesh. This could include sociological surveys focusing on particular groups, focus group discussions, community security initiatives, and further academic research.

■ **Poorly understood informal methods of human security governance**. This report has noted that non-formal policing and deterrence mechanisms play a significant role in maintaining human security in some communities. Given the prominence of such initiatives, further research should be developed to ensure that they are better understood.

■ **Human security and climate change**. Bangladesh is likely to be one of the countries that suffer most from the effects of climate change. The environmental impact of climate change is increasingly being linked to other factors, such as economic, food, and health security. Despite this, little serious analysis is available of possible scenarios for the effects of climate change on human security in Bangladesh. It is thus essential that this is addressed as quickly as possible, so that the implications for the interlinking dimensions of human security can be more fully understood.

1

Introduction

BANGLADESH'S RECENT HISTORY has been dominated by periods of intense political competition between the two main political parties - the Awami League (AL) and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). From 1991 to 2006, power alternated between them, with their factional-style of politics resulting in the increasing politicisation of bureaucracy and other aspects of life. During this period, corruption became entrenched in daily life, with the security of many depending on connections with whoever was in power.

The events of late 2006 and early 2007 showed how unstable and unsustainable the political system had become. In the run-up to elections in late 2006, the opposition AL claimed that the proposed leader of the Caretaker Government was linked to the incumbent BNP and their partners in government, the *Jamaat-e-Islami party*.[2] The situation became increasingly tense with violence erupting frequently on the streets of Dhaka. Eventually, on 11 January 2007 the interim government stepped down and a state of emergency was declared. A new Caretaker Government was established on 12 January 2008. The state of emergency remained in place throughout 2007 and limited certain political freedoms, such as the right to assembly. Parliamentary elections are scheduled to take place in December 2008.

For a country such as Bangladesh, where the primary threats to security are non-traditional (i.e. non-military), the concept of human security is potentially very important. It can offer a fresher way of understanding many vital processes within the country, which could lead to more effective, better-targeted policy-making (including the policies of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international donors). There are numerous factors which may help or hinder the development of such policies, many of which are considered within this report. Nonetheless, this research proceeds from the assumption that the concept of human security provides a useful framework to:

a) analyse whether people feel safe and secure, which should be a worthwhile goal in itself for all states regardless of the level of economic development;

b) understand the drivers of insecurity (and the factors of security) and the relationship between them;

c) assess whether or to what extent there is a link between security and development; and,

d) propose legal, operational and/or socio-economic interventions to tackle the root causes of insecurity and create better long-term conditions for social, economic and personal development.

2 In Bangladesh, a neutral interim Caretaker Government is formed prior to General Elections.

Human security is an extremely wide concept, which has various advantages and disadvantages. In practice, this means that numerous definitions and methodologies for analysing human security exist, all of which may be valid according to their respective goals and audiences.[3] This can be seen in the few previous studies of human security in Bangladesh, which have informed the development of this report.[4]

This report considers human security in a broad and flexible manner. It tries to emphasise the linkages between different forms of human insecurity, and between human security, poverty and development. This approach is informed by Saferworld's core expertise in practical intervention in areas such as armed violence and community security. Experience has shown that initiatives to address armed violence must be comprehensive in nature and must take account of numerous factors: the wider security situation; public attitudes towards different forms of crime and insecurity; the capacity of the state to improve arms control; the quality of policing and the effectiveness of other state security bodies; etc.

Similarly, community security programmes, despite primarily being aimed at addressing local threats, must be sensitive to national (and international) security problems. In some cases, it may be impossible for local actors to adequately address a problem that depends on national-level changes; in others, it may be essential to address an issue locally before it escalates into a nationwide threat. For this reason, this wider overview of human security across Bangladesh will also provide crucial depth to any future initiatives on community security and armed violence.

This report presents the findings of field research, undertaken throughout Bangladesh between September and December 2007, into human security, community safety and armed violence.

Information included in this survey was gathered using five methods:[5]

- **Household survey**. Using a random (probability) sampling technique, a series of questions were asked to members of 2,000 households. This national survey was designed to provide a representative analysis of perceptions of community insecurity and armed violence in Bangladesh.

- **Focus group discussions**. Ten focus group discussions were conducted during the field research in Savar, Dhaka, Jessore, Bagerhat, Tetulia (Panchagarh), Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Sylhet and Sunamganj.

- **Key informant interviews**. Over 45 interviews were conducted with a broad cross-section of stakeholders from government and civil society.

- **Media survey**. The analysis drew upon reports containing particular key-words from a selection of nine newspapers (Bangla: *Protham Alo*; *Janakantha*; *Daily Jugantor*; *Manabjamin*; *Samakal*; *Bangladesh 2000*. English: *Daily Star*; *News Today*; *New Age*) for a one-year period between 1 October 2006 and 30 September 2007.

- **Desk research**. Government statistics and a variety of secondary sources were analysed.

The report is ambitious in its scope and aims, but does not claim to be a comprehensive or definitive analysis of human security in Bangladesh. It faced several constraints, particularly the lack of secondary data and limited resources (including time). The concept of 'human security' is still fairly new and collecting and interpreting information is a challenge for all research organisations, including local partner organisations. In recognition of this, the report is designed to act as a catalyst for future research by

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3 Indeed, it may be argued that given the breadth and scope of 'human security', combined with its importance, it is a subject that has in fact been given far too little analysis, and that each new piece of research on this topic is likely to add greater dimension and depth to a field of study that is still in its infancy.

4 Among previous such reports, the 2002 UNDP report entitled 'Human Security in Bangladesh: In Search of Justice and Dignity' and the 'Bangladesh Human Security Assessment 2005' funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) are the most notable (see bibliography).

5 More detailed information on the methodology can be found in the annexes at the end of the report.

highlighting the many areas and linkages relating to human security in Bangladesh that are poorly understood and rarely investigated in detail.

There are three key target audiences for this research. The first is the Government of Bangladesh, which has ultimate responsibility for strengthening the human security of all Bangladeshi citizens. The second is Bangladeshi NGOs. In every country, civil society has an important role to play in security, particularly in terms of community safety and human security; in Bangladesh, where civil society plays a vital role in both service delivery and influencing policy, this role is extremely significant. The third target audience is the international community – particularly international donors who are starting to pay more attention to the linkages between security and development, but also the various bilateral, regional and international actors co-operating with Bangladesh whose actions have an impact on human security within the country.

This paper is structured into four main sections. Section A gives a definition for 'human security' and then attempts to identify the key variables or 'vital core' of human security in Bangladesh, based on local interpretations of security, and various expert opinions. This makes it possible to outline an approximate categorisation of the main factors of human security and insecurity in Bangladesh.

Section B provides a detailed description of the main types of insecurity identified in Bangladesh, as well as their causes, and the resulting impact on people's lives. The scope of this undertaking into the 'topography of (in)security', while far-reaching, should not be considered truly comprehensive. Rather the intention is to make researchers and policy-makers aware of the linkages between different threats, and be sensitive to this in their actions; thus increasing the relevance and success of measures that result. To give an example, organisations working on crime prevention do not themselves need to be experts on property law, but they do need to be aware that land and property disputes are one of the largest causes of conflict in Bangladesh.

Section C goes on to look at responses to human insecurity in Bangladesh. It looks first at the formal, governmental machinery for providing safety and security and then at informal mechanisms, both traditional and modern, to achieve the same goals. The paper then concludes with Section D, which summarises the main findings of this research, and analyses possible implications for the future.

Section A

Defining human security in Bangladesh

THIS SECTION AIMS to clarify what this report means by 'human security', and sketch the main categories relevant to Bangladesh. This is done by using a flexible definition of human security that can be adapted to local circumstances.

2

The dimensions of human security in Bangladesh

THIS CHAPTER BEGINS by exploring the complexities involved in trying to understand human security as a concept, before explaining the appropriateness of the definition adopted by this report. It also looks briefly at related terms such as 'community safety' and 'armed violence'. It then looks more specifically at how the concept of 'human security' can be most usefully applied in Bangladesh.

2.1 Definitions

Human security

There is no single internationally agreed definition of human security, and a multitude of definitions are available.[6] The idea of human security first came to prominence with the publication of the 1994 United Nations (UN) Human Development Report entitled 'New Dimensions of Human Security'. The report emphasised that 'for most people, a feeling of insecurity arises more from worries about daily life than from the threat of a cataclysmic world event. Will they and their families have enough to eat? Will they lose their jobs? Will their streets and neighbourhoods be safe from crime? Will they be tortured by a repressive state? Will they become a victim of violence because of their gender? Will their religion or ethnic origin target them for persecution?'[7] It went on to give the following definition:

Human security can be said to have two main aspects. It means, first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression. And second, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life – whether in homes, in jobs or in communities. Such threats can exist at all levels of national income and development.[8]

As a consequence, the 1994 UN Human Development Report continues to state that human security consists of two fundamental components: 'freedom from fear' and 'freedom from want'.[9] Some practitioners have however, rejected this, as it has been

6 For a sample of some of the variety that is on offer, a website known as the Global Development Research Center provides a document grouping together many different definitions of human security: <http://www.gdrc.org/sustdev/husec/Definitions.pdf>, accessed 9 April 2008.
7 United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 1994*, (UNDP, 1994), p 22.
8 Ibid p 23.
9 Ibid p 24.

considered that in concentrating on both forms of human security, an impractically wide definition is created. Subsequent definitions are therefore, generally divided between those that primarily focus on forms of insecurity that relate to violence, crime and justice and those that take a broader approach and include additional sources of deprivation: for example economic, food and health security.

This report supports a more holistic approach to human security, on the grounds that a limited definition pre-judges what constitutes human security within a given context. Thus, the following definition, adapted from a paper by Sabine Alkire, is preferred:[10]

Human security is achieved when the vital core of all human lives is safeguarded from critical pervasive threats, in a way that is consistent with long-term human fulfilment.

Alkire states that the 'vital core' consists of 'fundamental human rights which all persons and institutions are obliged to respect or provide, even if the obligations are not perfectly specifiable'.[11] It is then up to the specific researcher or agency to provide their own definition of what constitutes this vital core in a given context; this is the task of this chapter.

Before moving on to look at how this definition relates to Bangladesh, it is useful to look briefly at two related terms: community security and armed violence.

Community security

Security is a complicated and constantly shifting dynamic that spans the individual (human security), the community (community security) and the state (national security). While distinctions can be drawn between these various aspects, they should not be considered to be exclusive of each other. For example, if people feel safe and included as a member of their local community, they are more likely to feel safe as individuals. This is because threats to individual security can most effectively be addressed at the local level, because local agencies (both governmental and non-governmental) are generally more aware of, and responsive to, local needs. Any analysis of human security therefore also needs to consider the 'human security of communities'.

For the purposes of this paper:

A secure community might be described as one in which all its members, including the vulnerable, live without significant fear of crime, violence, intimidation, disorder, or anti-social behaviour.[12]

However, if as argued above, it is impossible to make a simple list of the components of human security, the same is true for community security: as communities in different locations will have very different concerns, depending on all sorts of factors (level of services; physical geography; rural/urban location; proximity of borders; sources of employment and income; etc.). Furthermore, community is not only defined by location, but also by factors such as ethnicity, religion, income level, profession, etc.

Armed violence

The most up-to-date work on armed violence is a Framing Paper by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), meant as a preparatory work for an OECD Guidance paper which will be published in 2008. This defines armed violence as:

10 Alkire S, *A Conceptual Framework for Human Security*, Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, (University of Oxford, 2003). The original definition states that 'The objective of human security is to safeguard the vital core of all human lives from critical pervasive threats, in a way that is consistent with long-term human fulfilment' (p 3). It has been adapted slightly because it makes more sense to focus on human security as a state or condition rather than as something having an objective in itself.
11 Ibid p 3.
12 Balkan Youth Union, Centre for Security Studies, CIVIL, Forum for Civic Initiatives, and Saferworld, *Creating Safer Communities: Lessons from South Eastern Europe*, (Saferworld, 2006), p 3.

the intentional and illegitimate use of armed force with small arms, light weapons and anti-personnel mines, threatened or actual, against a person, group, community or state that results in death, injury and/or psycho-social harm and that can undermine prospects for development.[13]

Armed violence reduction and prevention (AVP) thus refers to measures and strategies to lessen the prevalence and impact of armed violence. This requires a focus both on small arms and on the underlying, structural causes of violence and human insecurity.

The same paper also gives a useful definition of 'criminal/political violence', which is relevant to Bangladesh:

'Beyond the limited scale of incidents of domestic violence are the more corrosive effects of organised/ disorganised criminal violence and political violence by a range of parties, including the government. Individuals may be guilty of violating criminal law and criminal organisations may exhibit trans-national elements. Political parties may be responsible for significant breaches of human rights. Alternatively, actors within armed political resistance movements may also engage in organised criminal activity, in part to finance their activities. In principle, state institutions have established responsibilities for addressing armed criminal violence, even if such powers may be abused'.[14]

Nevertheless, strategies to reduce armed violence cannot work in isolation; they must be placed in the wider human security context and link closely to other initiatives to boost human security. This report thus looks at armed violence as one dimension of human insecurity.

2.2 Perceptions of human security in Bangladesh

In recognition of the amorphous nature of human security, this report uses information from a variety of research techniques to provide information on how 'human security' is understood within the context of Bangladesh.

2.2.1 Household survey

A household survey queried people's attitudes to human security. The responses show that there are several forms of human insecurity that may not be so common in some other parts of the world, but are major worries in Bangladesh. They also show that there are significant differences to perceptions of human (in)security depending on location and gender.

In answer to the question:

Which of these social issues would you say are the five biggest problems in your area at the moment? (Figure 1)

Bangladeshis were most concerned by issues linked to basic economic security: the most common answers were poverty (69 percent) and unemployment (65 percent), closely followed by provision of utilities (56 percent). The high priority given to 'vulnerability to natural disasters' (51 percent) also emphasises the importance of environmental security, which is unsurprising in a year that saw two phases of devastating floods followed by Cyclone Sidr.

By contrast, elements of insecurity which could be classified as 'freedom from fear' (for example, crime, extortion, availability of firearms) came further down the list, with crime rating as one of the five main concerns of about one-third of Bangladeshis. Of

13 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee Network on Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation, *Designing, Implementing and Monitoring Armed Violence Reduction: A Framing Paper for OECD DAC Guidance on Armed Violence Reduction*, (OECD DAC, 2007), p 7.
14 Ibid p 10.

course, this is still a very significant proportion of the population, and it also does not mean that the other two-thirds are definitely not concerned by crime (only that this is not one of their highest concerns). Nonetheless, it shows that a definition of human security that focused only on 'freedom from fear' would be ignoring precisely those areas which Bangladeshis themselves feel to be most significant.

% of respondents identified as a problem
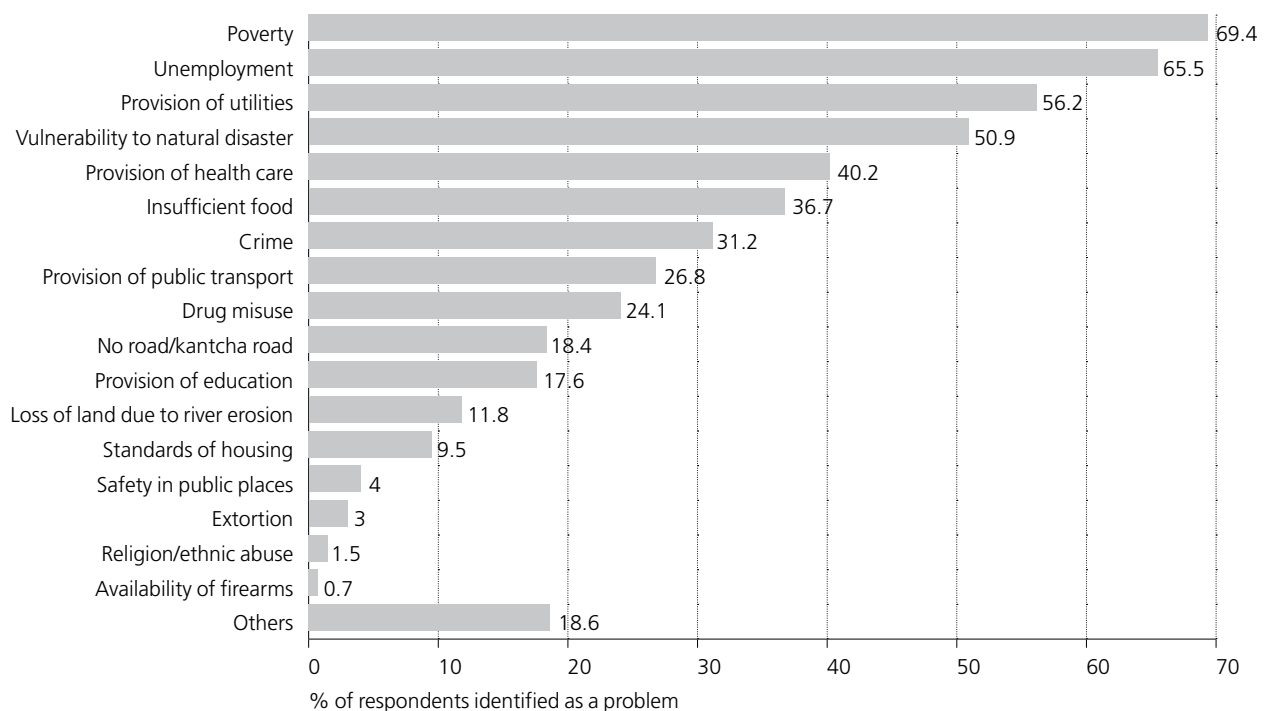
Figure 1: Major problems in respondents' locality (up to five answers allowed)

What makes you feel insecure in your life in general? (Table 1)

When participants were asked more directly about sources of insecurity, concern about natural disasters was the most common response (53 percent), followed closely by a lack of healthcare, a perceived increase in crime (28 percent), and worries over drug abuse (23 percent).

Some of the differences in perceptions of insecurity by location and gender are quite significant. Worries about natural disasters are a much greater concern in rural areas (where the lack of infrastructure and secure housing means they pose a greater risk) than in urban areas, where the two most frequent responses are crime and drug abuse. The differences by gender are less striking, but it is still notable that women are more likely than men to be concerned by matters such as food security and health services. These differences underline the fact that what constitutes 'human security' differs from person to person and group to group.

Table 1: Sources of insecurity by location and gender
(% of respondents; up to three responses allowed)

Source of insecurity cited	Rural		Urban		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Natural disaster	58	58	37	36	53
No health services	52	54	28	35	48
Increase in crime	24	24	41	38	28
Drug abuse	20	16	39	39	23
No police station in the area	18	15	12	14	16
Lack of job security	12	10	20	26	14
Seasonal/chronic food insecurity	16	16	5	6	14
Loss of land due to river erosion	15	13	3	5	12

In your view, what are the most frequent abuses/crimes/injustices in Bangladesh (or your area)? (Table 2)

More than three-quarters (77 percent) thought that personal property crimes such as theft, burglary, robbery and mugging are the most common form of crime or injustice; among urban respondents these were an even greater concern (89 percent). However, the rest of the table shows again that the range of concerns about crime and insecurity goes well beyond narrow concepts of violent criminality. The second highest cause of concern was dowry-related crime (56 percent). This has a strong gender element but might not be classified as gender-specific inasmuch as dowry problems often affect whole families. However, the prevalence of gender-related insecurity is also indicated by the prevalence of concerns about sexual violence and harassment (21 percent) and about domestic violence (11 percent).

Another important finding is that land disputes ('tenure insecurity') are also a major issue. Disputes over properties were the third most frequent form of crime/injustice identified (35 percent); land grabbing and landlessness (15 percent), as well as slum evictions (4 percent) were also mentioned by respondents. It is also notable that drug abuse was again ranked high up the list of worries, being the fourth most popular response with 29 percent. Lastly, it can be seen from the table that again there are significant differences in perceptions of crime and violence according to location (rural/urban) and gender.

Table 2: Worries about specific crime, violence and unlawful acts
(% of respondents; multiple responses permitted)

Worries	Rural		Urban		Total
	Male	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	
Personal property crimes (theft, burglary, robbery, mugging)	72	75	89	89	77
Dowry	55	59	47	59	56
Dispute over properties	36	33	38	35	35
Drug abuse	23	23	52	46	29
Sexual violence (eve teasing/ harassment in public/work places)	16	21	27	30	21
Land grabbing and being landless	16	12	16	17	15
Physical violence by strangers	9	12	20	24	13
Domestic violence	10	14	8	9	11
Political violence	9	4	24	19	10
Police harassment/false arrest	9	7	20	12	10
Extortion	6	5	19	17	9
Murder	5	6	14	21	8
Violence using firearms	6	4	13	16	7
Acid violence	6	5	7	12	6
Women and children trafficking	5	5	4	9	6
Ethnic/religious violence	5	3	8	9	5
Slum eviction	2	4	8	7	4
Kidnapping and ransom	3	3	3	4	3

2.2.2 **Focus group participants' views on human security**

Although the focus group discussions were primarily intended to seek detailed insights into crime and violence, they also illustrated the importance of broader aspects of human insecurity, such as economic exploitation and environmental inse-curity. Moreover, the cancellation of one focus group discussion following Cyclone Sidr illustrates the importance of environmental threats to any understanding of human security in Bangladesh.

Across the ten focus groups that were held, certain key issues were repeatedly raised

where participants were largely in agreement. Firstly, there was a general perception that the state has not historically provided security and justice to much of the population. The police came in for particular criticism, while the courts were also thought to be biased and ineffective. The Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) was however, perceived extremely positively by nearly all participants, and there was a general belief that the caretaker government, with the help of the RAB, had made considerable strides in reducing crime and insecurity during 2007. This also linked to a perception that previous 'political' governments had fostered insecurity, leading to a distrust of politicians.

Secondly, many participants had concerns about the ownership and use of land and water resources. They were particularly worried by the misuse of *khas* land (government-owned common land) by powerful figures, which meant that poor people who had always farmed such land now found access restricted. This was also true of water resources. Participants from Bagerhat and Sunamganj included a number of fish farmers and *gher* owners. Fish farmers reported frequent clashes over control and use of *haors* (areas for fish cultivation). *Gher* (fish-farm) owners also felt insecure and often possessed arms in order to protect their waters.

Thirdly, there was significant awareness of the extra insecurities faced by vulnerable groups, particularly women and minorities. Many participants were concerned by the prominence of domestic violence, particularly for dowry-related reasons, though it was noted that this was often not discussed in detail because it was still somewhat taboo, and many women who suffered from domestic violence suffered in silence. Other participants noted that women, especially poor women, were also vulnerable to sexual assault, rape, and the possibility of being forced into human trafficking.

Fourthly, many participants from across the country were worried that drug abuse and drug trafficking were becoming increasingly prevalent, seeing this both as a crime and a threat to social stability.

Lastly, many participants were concerned about armed violence, particularly in areas that are known to be near major trafficking routes, such as Cox's Bazar and Chittagong on the southern coast and Jessore near the south-western border with India. There was a general awareness that weapons were being moved through these areas, with several participants attesting to have been directly affected by this trade. It was also noted that, as a result of the movement of arms across Bangladesh, criminals find it easy to get access to weapons.

2.2.3 **Key informants' views on human security**

Key informant interviews were held under conditions of anonymity, in order to allow the informants to speak freely. It is thus not possible to attribute the comments here to specific individuals. Instead, the intention is to provide a summary of the main ideas raised by the informants and the implications they have for understanding human security in Bangladesh.

The first point, on which there was general agreement, is that the connotations of human security are very different from country to country and that it does not make sense to judge security in Bangladesh by the standards of the West. In particular, while in the developed world questions about security do relate primarily to freedom from fear, in Bangladesh (and many other developing countries) it is impossible to ignore the 'freedom from want' angle. In fact, 'freedom from want' and 'freedom from fear' are inter-dependent in all sorts of ways, and therefore any analysis of human security needs to be sensitive to this.

Beyond this, most interviewees approached the topic from one of two perspectives. The first was the idea that human security was closely linked to survival and the satisfaction of basic needs, which included food, clothes, shelter, health, education, and opportunities for employment. Although the state (and society more generally) has responsibility for seeing that these basic needs are met, this does not mean that

the state itself has to directly provide food, shelter, education or employment to all. The important thing is that it creates an *enabling environment* which allows all citizens to meet their needs. For example, in developed countries, the government does not directly provide food for most of its citizens, but through its laws and policies, it maintains an environment which ensures that food is readily available to all but the poorest (who are then supported more directly).

The second approach was to consider human security in terms of rights and freedoms. As one expert argued, the advantage of this approach is that it makes it possible to link the provision of security with the protection of citizens' rights under the Constitution. It can therefore be argued that the state has certain responsibilities with regard to human security; where people feel that the state is not fulfilling these responsibilities, they can refer to the Constitution to support their arguments. The same expert suggested that these rights include: the right to political freedom; the right to economic freedom; the right to social opportunities (primary education, primary healthcare, etc); the right to expect transparent government; and the right to protective security.

It should be noted that these two approaches are not in competition with each other. The 'basic needs' approach tends to focus more on freedom from want. The rights-based approach is broader in scope, arguing that the government has a duty to fulfil basic needs for economic freedom and social opportunity, but that other aspects of governance such as protective security (i.e. freedom from fear) and transparency (the ability to hold the government to account) are equally important in achieving a full sense of security.

Lastly, the key informants highlighted the importance of the political system in human security. Several experts drew an explicit link between the level of political stability in the country and human security, in two ways. Firstly, there was widespread agreement that the political chaos of late 2006 and early 2007 had caused great insecurity, and that the caretaker government established after 11 January 2007 ('1/11') had averted a wider security crisis. Secondly, many experts also noted the close links between previous 'political' governments and crime and the destabilising effects that resulted from the gradual politicisation of many aspects of daily life.

2.3 **The vital core: Key categories**

Drawing on all of the information and analysis above, this paper proposes that the main issues surrounding human security in Bangladesh can be grouped together into eight general categories of security, the first four of which broadly relate to 'freedom from want' and the second four to 'freedom from fear', though this division is somewhat artificial. This list should not be considered exhaustive, but considered appropriate given the responses received from the household survey, focus group discussions and key informant interviews.

The following table identifies these categories and links them to specific threats. It also links each type of security to relevant passages in the Constitution in order to demonstrate that, as some experts argue, it is possible in many ways to see human security in terms of fundamental rights and freedoms.

Based on this rough grouping into 'freedom from want' and 'freedom from fear' categories of security, Chapter 3 briefly highlights the most important issues relating to 'freedom from want', while Chapter 4 considers 'freedom from fear'.

The eight categories in the table above represent basic types of security that are more or less universal. However, certain groups and communities may be more vulnerable to specific types of insecurity or experience insecurity in a different way. There are many groups that are potentially vulnerable (for example, the disabled, the aged, youth and children, and people with learning difficulties) but unfortunately it is not possible

Table 3: Vital core

Type of security	Threats to this security	Key passages in Constitution
Economic security	Threats to economic livelihood from poverty, unemployment, economic exploitation, economic instability, etc.	15. Provision of basic necessities. It shall be a fundamental responsibility of the State to attain, through planned economic growth, a constant increase of productive forces and a steady improvement in the material and cultural standard of living of the people, with a view to securing to its citizens:
Health security	Threats to health, e.g. from infectious disease, accident and injury, poor sanitation, etc.	1. the provision of the basic necessities of life, including food, clothing, shelter, education and medical care; 2. the right to work, that is the right to guaranteed employment at a reasonable wage having regard to the quantity and quality of work;*
Food security	The threat of hunger caused by the lack of reliable food supplies	3. the right to reasonable rest, recreation and leisure; and
Environmental security	Threats to a productive, healthy life due to environmental factors such as natural disasters, poor resource management, and climate change	4. the right to social security, that is to say to public assistance in cases of undeserved want arising from unemployment, illness or disablement, or suffered by widows or orphans or in old age, or in other such cases.
Personal security and security of possessions	Threats to life, and physical and emotional well-being from all forms of crime, including theft, violent and organised crime (and the fear of such crime)	31. Right to protection of law. To enjoy the protection of the law, and to be treated in accordance with law, and only in accordance with law, is the inalienable right of every citizen, wherever he may be, and of every other person for the time being within Bangladesh, and in particular no action detrimental to the life, liberty, body, reputation or property of any person shall be taken except in accordance with law.
Security from misuse of drugs and alcohol†	Threats to personal security from drug-related crime; threats to health security for drug addicts and their families; threats to social stability/community security in areas/groups with high levels of abuse	
Tenure security	Threats arising from contestation of land use, and from landlessness.	42. Rights to property. (1) Subject to any restrictions imposed by law, every citizen shall have the right to acquire, hold, transfer or otherwise dispose of property, and no property shall be compulsorily acquired, nationalised or requisitioned save by authority of law.
Political security	Threats to personal, community or national security from political instability, political violence, and politically-backed criminal activity	37. Freedom of assembly. Every citizen shall have the right to assemble and to participate in public meetings and processions peacefully and without arms, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interests of public order health. 39. Freedom of thought and conscience, and of speech. (1) Freedom or thought and conscience is guaranteed.

* Article 20 also guarantees 'Work as a right and duty': "(1) Work is a right, a duty and a matter of honour for every citizen who is capable of working, and everyone shall be paid for his work on the basis of the principle "from each according to his abilities to each according to his work".

† Drug (and alcohol) abuse does not fit neatly into one category, containing elements of personal security, health security and social stability. Given the importance of drug abuse to the public, and to many of the key informants interviewed, it is categorised as a separate form of insecurity in Bangladesh requiring its own targeted response.

to consider the concerns of all groups in detail within this survey. However, the human security of the following four groups has been given specific attention in Chapter 5:

■ Women and girls;

■ Ethnic and religious minorities;

■ Geographically vulnerable groups (for example, slum dwellers, border communities, remote rural areas, areas vulnerable to natural disasters and *char* lands) and the landless; and,

■ The poorest of the poor.[15]

It should be underlined that many human security concerns cannot be easily slotted

15 Again, there are a number of relevant passages in the Constitution about equal opportunities and the protection of the rights of women, girls, and ethnic and religious minorities. These need not be listed in full, but include: Article 2A (The state religion); Article 19 (Equality of opportunity); Article 28 (Discrimination on grounds of religion, etc.); and Article 41 (Freedom of religion).

into just one of the categories above, and that because of the inter-linkages between categories, it may not be possible to adequately address one human security challenge without also making progress on a range of related issues.

Lastly, the quality of governance is a key overarching challenge to human security in Bangladesh, which has implications for all eight categories identified above. For example, many members of the public believe that the behaviour of state officials directly threatens their security (for example, harassment by corrupt officials, police brutality, or illegal seizure of land). In many cases, the initial source of human insecurity is then supplemented by the inability of state mechanisms to provide access to justice. This is considered in more detail in Section C.

Section B

Mapping human security in Bangladesh

THIS SECTION ATTEMPTS to 'map' human security in Bangladesh according to the framework described in Table 3. Chapter 3 looks briefly at four factors that can be loosely grouped together under the heading 'freedom from want', while Chapter 4 looks in more detail at the remaining four factors linked to 'freedom from fear'. Chapter 5 then considers the human security of certain vulnerable groups. For each of these three chapters, the report tries to identify the underlying causes driving each type of insecurity. Where appropriate, it also briefly considers how such questions are addressed by formal and informal security and justice mechanisms; as a rule, though, the analysis of security maintenance and governance is dealt with separately in Section C, largely because it is not appropriate to group one agency to one specific threat: one threat requires the cooperation of several actors, while each actor must respond to multiple threats.

3

Freedom from want

THIS CHAPTER DOES NOT aim to be comprehensive. It was deemed impossible for the research to look in equal detail at all aspects of human security, and because the main components of 'freedom from want' are already well-researched. Nonetheless, this report does attempt to sketch at least the basic outlines of the human insecurities relating to economic, food, health and environmental security, for two reasons. Firstly, as the previous chapter has shown, it is these forms of insecurity that are perceived by Bangladeshis themselves to be the most threatening. Thus, any accurate 'map' of human security concerns must document this correctly, even if it does not analyse each threat in detail. Secondly, a key hypothesis of this report is that there are strong linkages between different forms of human insecurity, including many links between forms of insecurity that are closer to 'freedom from want' and those that are closer to 'freedom from fear'; clearly, many of these links will be missed unless the initial list of human security concerns is reasonably comprehensive.

3.1 Economic security

It is not a surprise that poverty and unemployment are considered to be the greatest problems facing most Bangladeshis (Figure 1 in Section 2.2), and that they are therefore a source of human insecurity. This is because poverty is a daily challenge for the majority of Bangladeshis, with 50 percent living below the poverty line.[16] Nonetheless, it is worth emphasising that economic vulnerability is not limited to those living without a stable income. The Commission on Human Security, an international panel of experts, argued this clearly in their 2003 report 'Human Security Now':

'When people's livelihoods are deeply compromised – when people are uncertain where the next meal will come from, when their life savings suddenly plummet in value, when their crops fail and they have no savings – human security contracts… But vulnerability and insecurity are experienced not only by people who live in extreme poverty. There are also people who have jobs and yet cannot afford essential prescription medicines, or safe living conditions, or school uniforms, lunches and transport costs to send their children to school'.[17]

For many people, the constant stress of trying to subsist, combined with related fears about ensuring access to food and staying healthy play a much greater role in making people feel insecure than crime or violence. Furthermore, limited economic resources

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16 'Bangladesh at a glance', development data from the World Bank. Available online at: <http://devdata.worldbank.org/AAG/bgd_aag.pdf>, accessed 17 April 2008.
17 Commission on Human Security, *Human Security Now*, (Commission on Human Security, 2003), p 73.

at the national and community levels make it harder to provide basic services, such as healthcare, sanitation and education.

Rural poverty is also a key cause of the rapid influx of people moving to cities (mostly Dhaka) in order to look for work; one key informant argued that it was wrong to call this process 'urbanisation', and that it should in fact be called 'slumisation' given that the majority of new arrivals end up adding to the slum population. The constant population growth in the city also helps to drive down wages in both the formal and the informal economies.

Many Bangladeshis have some form of employment but feel that the conditions in which they work are extremely poor and constitute economic exploitation. Focus group discussions with tea workers in Tetulia and Sylhet, for example, said that they only received to Tk 30–38 (the equivalent of about half a US dollar) for a days work, and this could reduce to Tk 18 during the off season. Workers from one tea garden in Tetulia also noted that the owner employed 15 veterinary surgeons to care for his cattle but the 2,000 workers had no healthcare facilities at all. Similar conditions were also reported to exist in the stone supplying industry.

It should be noted, however, that perceptions of economic exploitation are not limited to exploitation by business owners. Some focus group participants suggested that NGOs that run micro-finance initiatives were also guilty of 'exploitation'. They claimed to know of many cases when people had borrowed micro-credit money which they had been unable to pay back due to steep rates of interest. This had led some people to get into a circle of debt, where they would borrow from each NGO in turn to pay off the debts of a previous loan. This seems to contradict the received wisdom that micro-credit initiatives usually have very high rates of return and are helping to lift millions of people out of poverty; it may be that while most NGOs are doing a good job, some are disbursing loans too freely and then putting pressure on recipients to see them repaid. This finding seems to tally with several others that suggest that NGOs are not seen in a universally positive light (see Section 7.4).

The third source of economic insecurity, the 'price hike' in the cost of basic goods, was one of the most high-profile concerns at the end of 2007 and start of 2008. Prices for basic goods such as rice, fertiliser and fuel rocketed as the year progressed. There were various reasons for this, many of which were outside the Government's control, including a strong rise in corresponding prices on world markets and the devastating floods and cyclone which caused widespread damage to agriculture and other industries. Whatever the reasons for the price hike, however, there is no doubt that this was a considerable source of insecurity for much of the population. This highlights that in many cases it is not so much poverty itself that causes economic insecurity so much as rapid changes in the economic situation, which people find difficult to react to.

Some interviewees also noted that economic development programmes could in themselves cause insecurity, especially for the poorest. For example, one key informant noted that strengthening the country's infrastructure was essential for economic development, but that in a highly populated country, building a new road often involves removing lots of (mostly illegally built) properties in slum areas: 'In order to develop, you end up kicking those with no roof over their head'.[18] Another example of development exacerbating insecurity can be found in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The construction of the Kaptai Reservoir resulted in several villages being submerged and caused considerable resentment. Even ten years after the peace accord had been negotiated, government development initiatives with new roads are often treated with suspicion by tribal inhabitants.

Overall, it is apparent that economic security plays a pivotal role in the perceived well-being of many respondents; it is also evident that it underlies many other forms

18 Anonymous interviewee, Dhaka, October/November 2007.

of insecurity. For example, the economic situation is closely inter-related with food security and with health security (since poor states with low budgets cannot afford to provide sufficient healthcare and food to meet the population's needs). The natural disasters that Bangladesh suffered in 2007 also demonstrate how closely economic security is related to environmental security.

With regard to 'freedom from fear', economic insecurities also contribute to political instability (for example, through regular labour unrest). The ready-made garment industry, for example, involves hundreds of people working closely together in relatively poor conditions for little money. Within this environment, it does not take much for frustration to turn into violent protests. This has happened regularly for years, and has continued even under the current Caretaker Government. Most recently, in January 2008 street protests erupted in the Mirpur area of Dhaka following rumours that factory owners had been involved in the deaths of two workers. The disturbances continued for several days, leaving hundreds of people injured and temporarily shutting down many businesses. This shows that poverty and economic insecurity can quite easily devalue 'freedom from fear' by causing unrest, looting and mob violence.

Desperate poverty is also seen to be one of the main drivers of crime and injustice (Figure 2). More generally, it may also be argued that low budgets make it hard to fund the crime and justice sectors sufficiently. There is also a strong link to tenure insecurity: on the one hand, people lack the economic resources and stability to pay to protect their land (either privately or through the state); on the other hand, tenure insecurity discourages long-term investment in the land which would boost agricultural and industrial productivity and unlock assets for other businesses – thus continuing a cycle of economic insecurity.
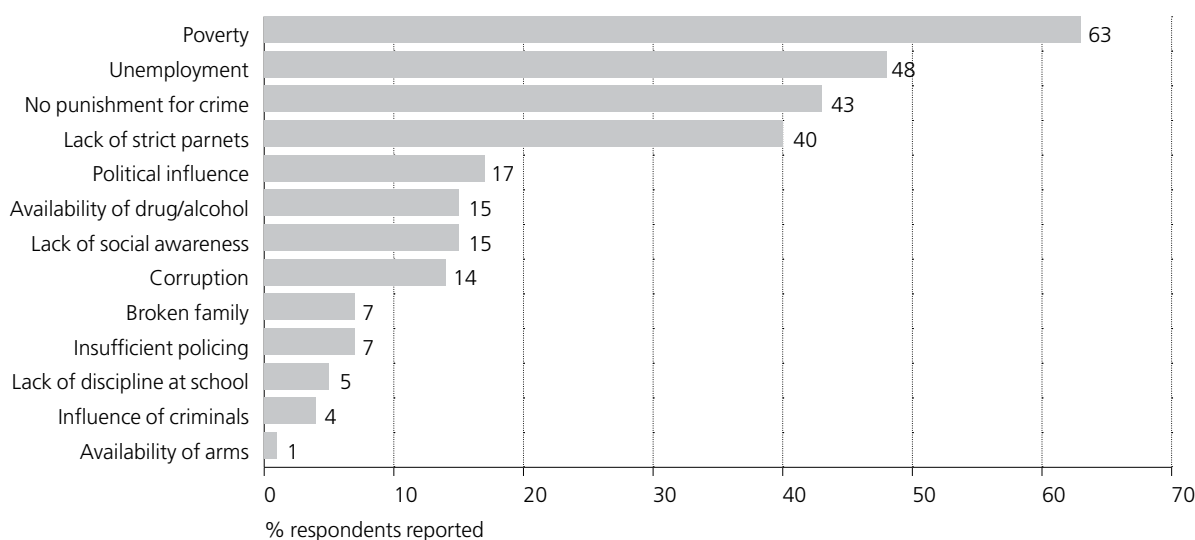
Figure 2: Reasons for torture/injustice/crime in the respondent's area

3.2 **Health security**

This research did not look in detail at the topic of health security, since this is an area that is already well-researched,[19] but it is considered briefly as healthcare was identified in the household survey as a concern, and in recognition of the overt linkages between health and many other forms of insecurity.

There has been major investment in healthcare in recent years from both the Government and the international community, with non-governmental organisations

19 Readers seeking a more detailed overview of the health situation in Bangladesh can find plenty of information on the country website of the World Health Organisation. A profile of Bangladesh can be found at <http://www.searo.who.int/LinkFiles/Country_Health_System_Profile_1-bangladesh.pdf>, accessed 9 April 2008.

also playing a crucial role in healthcare service delivery. This has led to significant improvements in health security. Nonetheless, the World Health Organisation (WHO) notes that Bangladesh will still likely fail to meet most of the targets set under the Millennium Development Goals[20] – demonstrating the huge scale of the challenge.

In the course of the key informant interviews and focus group discussions, three main issues surrounding health security arose. The first is the sensitive topic of fertility rates and rising population levels. The total fertility rate is actually falling, but at 3.0 per woman it is still high. Combined with reductions in child mortality, this means that the population of Bangladesh is continuing to rise; the population nearly doubled in the 30-year period between 1971 and 2001: from 76 million to at least 130 million; the population is now believed to be over 140 million.[21] Several key informants, both governmental and non-governmental, noted that a rapidly rising population presents two key challenges. Firstly, despite major efforts in poverty reduction, improving education and healthcare, even if there is a great numerical improvement in the number of people being lifted out of poverty, it is difficult to bring down the overall percentage of people in poverty when children are still being born into poverty at a high rate. Secondly, the rising population creates even greater pressure on land use and infrastructure, both in rural and urban locations, causing tenure insecurity, environmental degradation and social tension. This led several interviewees to claim that Bangladesh is 'over-populated' (though of course it is impossible to calculate what an 'ideal' population number might be) and that this undermines efforts to strengthen human security.

The second issue, which relates to wider definitions of community safety and security, is accidents and injuries. Road safety is one of the most high-profile causes of accidental death in Bangladesh, with reports of traffic fatalities in the press on a daily basis: the media survey of nine newspapers that accompanied this research counted a total of 568 deaths and 485 injuries reported over a twelve-month period in 2006-2007. Official statistics for 2005 reported that there were at least 3,187 fatalities and 2,755 injuries (Table 4). However, according to a 2004 report by the Accident Research Centre at the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, the official statistics under-represent the number of accidents and injuries, and 'it is estimated that the actual fatalities could well be 10,000-12,000 each year'.[22] Accident levels are particularly high when the relatively low levels of car ownership are taken into consideration; the majority of deaths are to pedestrians and involve trucks and buses.

Table 4: Road accidents, deaths and injuries, 2000-2005[23]

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Accidents	3419	3317	3791	3406	3917	3955
Killed	3050	2794	2919	2518	2968	3187
Injured	2663	2708	3267	3052	2752	2755

The third issue which should be mentioned is drug abuse. Drug abuse is in part a criminal problem, both in terms of drug trafficking and in terms of drug addicts committing petty crimes such as robbery to fuel their drug habit. However, it also relates to health security because drug addiction itself is a health problem and because drug users are at much higher risk of suffering from other health problems, particularly certain infectious diseases. Drug control is considered in more detail in Section 4.2.

From this, it is clear that health issues affect, and are in turn affected by, a variety of other security related factors. An ever-growing population, for example, impacts on

20 World Health Organisation, *Bangladesh Country Health System Mini-Profile 2007*./ http://www.searo.who.int/LinkFiles/ Country Health_System_Profile_1-bangladesh.pdf
21 http://www.unfpa-bangladesh.org/charts/populationSize.htm
22 Hoque MM, Solaiman TA, Khondaker B and Sarkar S, *Road Safety in Bangladesh: Overview of Problems, Progress, Priorities, and Options*, (Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, 2005), p 3.
23 Source: Police Directorate, Table 7.17 in Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *2005 Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh (25th Edition)*, (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2007), p 270.

capacity to satisfy basic needs and allow for the fulfilment of universal capabilities (rights and freedoms). It is also linked to elements of 'freedom from fear' as crime can exacerbate weaknesses in the already vulnerable and under-resourced health service. In addition to these Bangladesh-specific findings, the Commission on Human Security argues that 'health security'[24] is not exactly synonymous with healthcare more generally, but that it is instrumental in other forms of security, since poor health undermines efforts in all other attempts at security provision, and high levels of poor health have a major effect on social structures and social stability.[25]

3.3 Food security

This research did not consider the topic of food security in detail; like other forms of 'freedom from want' insecurity, there is already considerable research available.[26] It is clear, however, that food security is a major concern for many Bangladeshis. Insufficient food was named as one of the five main problems facing nearly 40 percent of household survey respondents (Figure 1 in Section 2.2), while seasonal/chronic food insecurity was listed as a major cause of insecurity for 14 percent of respondents (this rises to 16 percent in rural areas [Table 1 in Section 2.2]). The prominence of food insecurity is however, not surprising given that 30 percent of the population do not reach minimum recommended dietary requirements (although this figure represents a major reduction in levels of hunger over the last 30 years).[27]

Food security is defined by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation in the following way:

'Food security exists when all people, at all times, have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life'.[28]

There are various aspects to food security, including the availability of food, stability of food supplies, access to food, nutritional content, and the safety of food (its preparation and overall sanitation). Stability of food supplies is a concern for many Bangladeshis, because of both seasonal variations in food availability and the disruption caused by natural disasters.

Like health security, food security is very closely linked to the overall economic situation. It is also very closely linked to environmental security: on a short-term basis, natural disasters, such as the floods and cyclone in 2007, destroy large quantities of food and severely disrupt agricultural production; over the longer term, environmental degradation can reduce the productivity of land and other resources, and this may be exacerbated by climate change.

3.4 Environmental security

There are various environmental threats that threaten the security of many Bangladeshis both as individuals and collectively. Vulnerability to natural disaster was one of the largest local problems reported in the household survey, and the highest reported cause of insecurity; loss of land to river erosion was also a major source of instability for over 10 percent of respondents (Figure 1 and Table 1 in Section 2.2). This is unsurprising given the particular devastation caused by natural disasters in 2007 (though

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24 Health is defined by the Commission on Human Security as not just the absence of disease, but as 'a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being'. Op cit Commission on Human Security p 96.
25 Ibid
26 Readers seeking more detailed information on food security in Bangladesh may consult *Food Security in Bangladesh: Papers Presented in the National Workshop, 19-20 October 2005*, (Government of Bangladesh/WFP-B, 2005).
27 World Health Organisation, *Bangladesh Country Health System Mini-Profile 2007*./ http://www.searo.who.int/LinkFiles/ Country Health_System_Profile_1-bangladesh.pdf
28 Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations – Special Programme for Food Security, <http://www.fao.org/ spfs/>, accessed 9 April 2008.

the household survey was carried out before Cyclone Sidr struck), which caused much greater death and suffering than any recent 'freedom from fear' insecurities.

Environmental security has both immediate and long-term dimensions. Over the shorter term, natural disasters are the most obvious way in which the environment can instantly create huge damage and engender major insecurity. Over the longer term, various environmental changes (particularly climate change and river erosion) may not only exacerbate the frequency of natural disasters but might also gradually lower the productivity of land and other resources, reduce the amount of land suitable for human settlement, and reverse successes achieved in alleviating poverty.

It is therefore apparent that environmental insecurity has notable cross-cutting linkages to both 'freedom from want' and 'freedom from fear'. Degradation of land threatens both individual and communal security by increasing levels of poverty, destroying livelihoods, threatening food security, exacerbating health insecurities and generating large scale internal displacement; which in turn, can lead to an increase in crime through: competition for resources, land grabbing, etc.

Below, four inter-related environmental threats that were regularly identified within the course of this research are briefly examined: natural disasters; riverbank erosion; pressure on resources; and climate change.

3.4.1 **Natural disasters**

Natural disasters were the most frequently cited cause of insecurity in life in general, with over half of all household survey respondents (53 percent) citing it as one of their primary concerns. It is notable that this was much more of a worry among rural respondents (58 percent) than among urban respondents (36-37 percent), indicating how much more vulnerable rural communities (where 85 percent of the population lives) are to natural disasters.

The two most frequent and most damaging forms of natural disaster in Bangladesh are cyclones and floods; droughts, earthquakes and landslides (in the north and east of the country) are also risks. This is demonstrated by Table 5, which summarises available information on natural disasters that have taken place in Bangladesh over the last 108 years, estimating the number killed, the total number of people affected, and the average number of people affected by each disaster. This shows just how frequent and how devastating floods and cyclones have been. From this, it is apparent that while cyclones kill more people, floods affect a greater percentage of the population overall.

Table 5: Natural disasters in Bangladesh, 1900–2008

Event	No. of events	Approximate total killed	Approximate total affected
Flood	49	48,451	219,517,204
average per event		989	4,479,943
Unspecified flood	20	3,143	52,495,778
average per event		157	2,624,789
Cyclone	66	610,069	66,340,260
average per event		9,244	1,005,156
Storm	58	6,670	3,322,510
average per event		115	57,285
Tropical storm	9	312	2,886,200
average per event		35	320,689
Drought	6	1,900,018	25,002,000
average per event		316,670	4,167,000
Earthquake	6	34	19,125
average per event		6	3,188

Source: The International Emergency Disasters Database (www.emdat.be)

In 2007, Bangladesh was especially affected by natural disasters. Firstly, two phases of flooding in June, and July and August caused immense devastation in a large area of South Asia, including several regions of Bangladesh. Then, on 15 November, Cyclone Sidr hit the south of the country, causing thousands of deaths and wiping away the homes and livelihoods of millions. The Asian Development Bank has stated that the floods and the cyclones combined affected '25 million people in 51 districts, caused severe damage to livelihood, infrastructure, and other assets; and disrupted economic activities, inflicting heavy losses to crops and slowing expansion in industries and services. The combined losses of the floods and cyclone are estimated at over \$3 billion. The losses to assets and output because of flooding amount to more than \$1 billion. Preliminary assessment indicates that the cyclone caused extensive damage of over \$2 billion'.[29]

In the days following Cyclone Sidr, many commentators noted a link between environmental insecurity, crime and poverty. There were various reports in the media suggesting that some people had suffered easily avoidable deaths because they refused to go to cyclone shelters as they feared leaving their livestock and homes unguarded; it was alleged that during a previous false tsunami warning, some people had been robbed while they waited in the shelters.[30] Moreover, one non-governmental key informant said that they were concerned that children were left unguarded while parents searched for food or went to collect disaster relief; there were also isolated stories of people who had been made homeless by the cyclone being forced off the land where they had taken refuge.[31]

In spite of this, it was generally noted that the crime and security situation in the immediate aftermath of the cyclone was actually very good – despite the devastation and desperation, no large-scale social disturbances were recorded.

3.4.2 Riverbank erosion

Riverbank erosion is less high-profile than other natural disasters, and tends to strike less suddenly (though it is to some extent unpredictable). Nonetheless, it causes considerable insecurity, through displacement, death and injury, and disruption of economic production, education, communications, sanitation facilities, etc. Riverbank erosion is caused because the course of rivers tends to shift over time. This may be exacerbated by poor management of water resources.

This is a sensitive issue for Bangladesh because it shares nearly all of its rivers with India, and there are frequent accusations that Indian water management does not take full account of the possible effects on the rivers further downstream in Bangladeshi territory.

The Government estimates that approximately 10,000 hectares of land are lost due to riverbank erosion every year, particularly around three of the largest rivers: the Jamuna, Ganges, and Padma.[32] According to a study by C R Abrar and S N Azad which interviewed over 200 households that were affected by riverbank erosion, 'about one million people are directly affected by riverbank erosion each year and landless in these areas could be as high as 70 percent'.[33] It found that 'affected households are frequently forced to settle in more disaster-prone areas where displacement can occur several times. On average each of the households studied were displaced 4.46 times'.[34] The study also noted that riverbank erosion could also have negative social effects, including an increase in violence within families. This is due to the strain placed on

29 Asian Development Bank, *Proposed Loan and Technical Assistance Grant to People's Republic of Bangladesh: Emergency Disaster Damage Rehabilitation (Sector) Project (Project Number 41657)*, (Asian Development Bank, 2008).

30 Khan AW, 'Hungry Wolf Really Came This Time' in *The Daily Star* (Dhaka), 19 November 2007; Hossain N, 'The Price We Pay' in *The Daily Star Forum Magazine*, Volume 3 Issue 1, January 2008.

31 Anonymous interviewee, Dhaka, October/November 2007.

32 Bangladesh Water Development Board, webpage on 'River bank erosion', <http://www.bwdb.gov.bd/>, accessed 9 April 2008.

33 Abrar CR and Azad SN, *Coping with Displacement: Riverbank Erosion in Northwest Bangladesh*, (RMMRU, RDRS, North Bengal Institute, 2003).

34 Ibid.

family structures by displacement: riverbank erosion often leads to the loss of jobs and/or livelihoods, which cause anger and frustration (particularly among males who can no longer provide for their families) that sometimes leads to violence. [35]

3.4.3 **Pressure on resources**

There is considerable pressure on various natural resources: most obviously land, but also woodland and water resources. This pressure comes from the fact that there is high and possibly unsustainable demand for these resources, which are often not used efficiently and are not well managed. This is caused by a number of factors, including high population levels, low agricultural productivity, the large proportion of people engaged in subsistence agriculture, riverbank erosion, change of land use, climate change, and tenure insecurity.

In turn, this pressure for resources is in itself a cause of instability for many people. In particular, it is a major source of conflict (sometimes violent), since different individuals or groups compete for use of these resources. For example, the expansion of shrimp farming over the last twenty years has been very profitable, but it has also had some uncomfortable side-effects. It is believed that some of the land re-designated for shrimp cultivation was captured through corruption or illegal methods. Shrimp cultivation has also led to deforestation around coastal areas, which has caused displacement for some people and may also exacerbate the effects of cyclones.[36] Similarly, disputes over forestry resources can also cause tension, particularly surrounding deforestation and access to 'reserved forests' in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.[37] The losers of such conflicts often suffer loss of livelihood and/or displacement. This not only makes them very vulnerable in terms of economic, food, health and further environmental insecurities, but also locks many into ongoing tenure insecurity.

3.4.4 **Climate change**

It is widely recognised that Bangladesh will be one of the countries that is hit hardest by climate change, both because of its geographical vulnerability and because of its weak infrastructure, which is largely due to poverty. At the High-Level Event on Climate Change hosted by the UN in September 2007, Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed stated that 'Bangladesh is particularly vulnerable to climate change given its location. As a low-lying delta in one of the highest rainfall areas of the world, Bangladesh is chronically prone to inundation'.[38]

Climate change is likely to have two main negative effects on Bangladesh. Firstly, there is a strong possibility that the natural disasters that repeatedly cause such destruction will occur with even greater frequency. Although it is difficult to attribute precise weather events to climate change, it appears that weather patterns are becoming more unpredictable and more violent. The Chief Adviser fears that 'Bangladesh and many others…are on the threshold of a climatic Armageddon…Devastating floods, cyclones, droughts and storm surges are now recurring with relentless regularity'.[39]

Secondly, and even more worryingly, there are fears that as a predominantly low-lying country, Bangladesh could suffer enormously from any rise in sea levels. According to the Chief Adviser, 'by some estimates, a one metre sea-level rise will submerge about one-third of the total area of Bangladesh, thereby uprooting 25-30 million of our people… They are most likely to become refugees of climate change'.[40]

It is now increasingly thought that it will not be possible to avoid climate change

35 Ibid.
36 Anonymous interviewee, Dhaka, October/November 2007.
37 Gain P (ed), *The Chittagong Hill Tracts: Life and Nature at Risk*, (Society for Environment and Human Development, 2000), p 19–21.
38 Statement by His Excellency Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed, Honorable Chief Adviser of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh at the High-level Event on Climate Change, New York, 24 September 2007, <http://www.un.int/bangladesh/statements/62/plenary_climate_change.htm>, accessed 9 April 2008.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.

entirely, and that therefore states must develop plans to respond. Climate change is not in itself the insecurity, so much as the changes it engenders. Where this relates to physical changes, there are already many practical measures that may be taken, for example, through better flood protection. However, while the environmental consequences of climate change are well-known, the social changes it will cause, and responses to them, have not been sufficiently discussed.

If the Chief Adviser's figure of 25-30 million 'refugees of climate change' is correct, there will be displacement on an enormous scale. This might have two main consequences. Firstly, urbanisation (or 'slumisation') would be likely to increase even more rapidly as desperate people moved towards the cities in search of work and food. This would further over-stretch already insufficient infrastructure and governance mechanisms, and could lead both to a collapse in living standards and an increase in social disorder. Secondly, there would likely also be much more emigration, in particular economic migration to India. This would be a very sensitive and possibly explosive political issue for both states; levels of tension would depend on how this intense migratory pressure was managed.

In recent months, several studies have come out that have explored the links between climate change and more direct forms of insecurity (i.e. crime, violence, and armed conflict).[41] These all identify Bangladesh as being potentially at risk of insecurity or conflict as a result of social unrest induced by climate change. In particular, a report by the German Advisory Council on Global Change looks in detail at potential scenarios for 'environmentally induced migration and conflict in Bangladesh'.[42] They attempt to predict possible ways in which the situation could develop if the worst predicted effects of climate change happen, with different scenarios depending on how various actors behave. Of course, such predictions make no claim to be accurate – it is hard enough to predict the environmental effects of climate change, without trying to forecast how a wide range of people and states will react. Nonetheless, such studies are right to raise attention to the fact that climate change will be not only an environmental problem, but also a major challenge for governance and for social, political and personal security.

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[41] See for example: Abbott C, *An Uncertain Future: Law Enforcement, National Security and Climate Change*, (Oxford Research Group, 2008); German Advisory Council on Global Change, *Climate Change as a Security Risk*, (WBGU, 2007; Smith D and Vivekananda J, *A Climate of Conflict: The links between climate change, peace and war*, (International Alert, 2007)

[42] Climate Change as a Security Risk (German Advisory Council on Global Change 2008) http://www.wbgu.de/wbgu_jg2007_engl.html

4

Freedom from fear

THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER looked at four aspects of human security that may be grouped together under the approximate heading of 'freedom from want'. This chapter looks at human security from another angle, that of 'freedom from fear'. Although this distinction is in some senses artificial, it remains useful as it serves to simplify the already complicated classification of human security. Nonetheless, in recognition of the strong linkages between different forms of insecurity, and to avoid pre-judging types of (in)security, this section goes somewhat beyond crime and justice.

From the findings of the field research, it is evident that insecurity is not only a matter of 'crime' at a personal or community level: there are also key factors of political insecurity (including an unstable political system that can erupt into violence), the threat of terrorism, and politicised violence in the higher education system.

Two other topics are identified as issues within this chapter that one might not automatically expect to find under the heading of 'freedom from fear', but are relevant to the Bangladesh context. The first issue - tenure insecurity - has been incorporated into this section as it reflects the unpredictability of property rights enforcement, the fear of losing one's land and the disincentives this creates, rather than a problem with 'want'. Furthermore, the weakness of property rights is primarily related to overall weaknesses in the legal system, and thus links to wider questions about security and access to justice. The second issue, drug abuse, has been highlighted separately both because it cuts across several other issues and because it was named as a serious concern in the household survey, focus group discussions and key informant interviews, and therefore warrants separate attention.

Before moving on to the four areas outlined above, however, this chapter begins with a brief overview of the public's overall perceptions of which crimes are most frequent and changes in crime rates under the Caretaker Government.

4.1 Overall experience of crime and changes under the Caretaker Government

Table 2 in Section 2.2 catalogued people's worries about specific crimes, violence, and unlawful acts. This showed that the most frequent cause of concern was personal property crimes such as theft, burglary, and robbery (77 percent). The second highest concern was dowry-related crimes (which will be considered in Section 5.1, as will other gender-related insecurity – 56 percent), followed by disputes over properties (tenure insecurity – 35 percent), and drug abuse (29 percent). Other forms of personal insecurity relating to violent crime, such as physical violence by strangers, violence using firearms and murder were a priority problem for about 8-13 percent of respondents. Political violence was reported as one of the main concerns by about 10 percent of people.

Further questions in the household survey sought to extrapolate information on public perceptions and experiences of crime. Table 6 documents the forms of crime that respondents believe occur most frequently within their area. This suggests that dowry-related problems are by far the most common problem for the majority of Bangladeshis. With an incidence of 64 percent, dowry dwarfs the next most frequent answers – drug abuse, theft and robbery, and property-related conflicts – all of which were reported to be a local problem by only 15 percent of respondents.

Table 6: Reported common incidents locally (% of respondents)

Category of incident	All	Category of incident	All
Dowry	64	Domestic violence	3
Drug/alcohol abuse	15	Murder	2
Theft, robbery or mugging	15	Physical violence by strangers	2
Property related conflicts	15	Armed violence	2
Sexual violence	4	Rape	1
Police harassment	4	Minority/religious violence	1
Politically influenced violence	4	Land robbery	1
Khas land acquisition by powerful people	3	Women and children trafficking	1
Conflict in managing joint-properties	3	Kidnapping/ransom	1
Extortion	3		

The household survey also attempted to identify which forms of crime and violence respondents or any member of their household had experienced themselves in the two years prior to the conducting of the household survey (Table 7).[43] A total of 946 incidents were reported for this period by 751 of the 2,000 households interviewed. This means that *just under two-fifths of households have experienced a crime in the past two years*, and some more than once.

Theft is shown to be the most frequent crime, with an average of more than 17 percent of households having experienced a theft. Other categories of crime that households had suffered included damage of property, threat of physical violence, loss of property to land-grabbers, muggings, and domestic violence. It is notable that only 2.7 percent of households reported having to make a dowry payment, although it was thought to be the most common form of insecurity – this apparent contradiction is discussed further in Section 5.1.

Table 7: Reported criminal, violent and unlawful acts experienced in the previous two years

Type of incident	No. of incidents	% of total respondents
Theft	346	17.3
Damage of property	84	4.2
Threat of physical violence	69	3.5
Loss of property to land-grabbers	54	2.7
Having to make dowry payment	53	2.7
Physical injury by beating	51	2.6
Domestic violence	51	2.6
Mugging	48	2.4
Forced to pay bribe	34	1.7
Eve-teasing and sexual harassment	23	1.4
Other	133	6.7
Total	**946**	

43 Two years was chosen because of the significant changes in security since the Caretaker Government took over in January 2007, as a result of which a one-year time-frame might not reflect broader trends.

One of the key tasks that the Caretaker Government has set itself since coming to power in January 2007 is to improve security across the country. Nine months on, when the household survey was carried out (October/November 2007), it appeared that the Government had been extremely successful in achieving this aim. Respondents reported a very strong sense that security had improved under the Caretaker Government; over 90 percent believed there had been a reduction in crime and violence, and only three percent thought that things had got worse (Table 8).

Table 8: Perception of change in incidences of crime, violence and unlawful acts, now compared to one year ago, by gender (% of respondents)

	Male	Female	Rural	Urban	Total
A lot less	48	38	44	41	43
A little less	47	54	51	51	51
About the same	3	5	3	4	4
A little more	2	3	2	3	2
A lot more incidents	1	1	1	1	1

This suggests that the Caretaker Government had remarkable success in providing a sense of public security throughout 2007. This improvement in security may in part turn out to be temporary (see Section 10); however, regardless of whether this is the case or not, the strength of the public perception that security improved in 2007 is undeniable, and was a key factor in high levels of public support for the Caretaker Government more generally.

4.2 Personal security

Personal security refers to individuals' physical and emotional well-being in relation to the effects of all forms of crime (including fear). Table 2 in Section 2.2 suggested that personal property crimes were by far the most frequent concern, with armed violence and organised crime coming lower down the list (although they are still notable concerns). This tallies with incidences of crime and unlawful acts which respondents and their households had themselves suffered (Table 8).

This section starts by looking at the perceived impact of such crimes on people's feeling of security. It then goes on to consider three sets of threats to personal security: personal property crimes; armed violence; and organised crime and *mastaani* ('muscle men').

4.2.1 Impact of crime
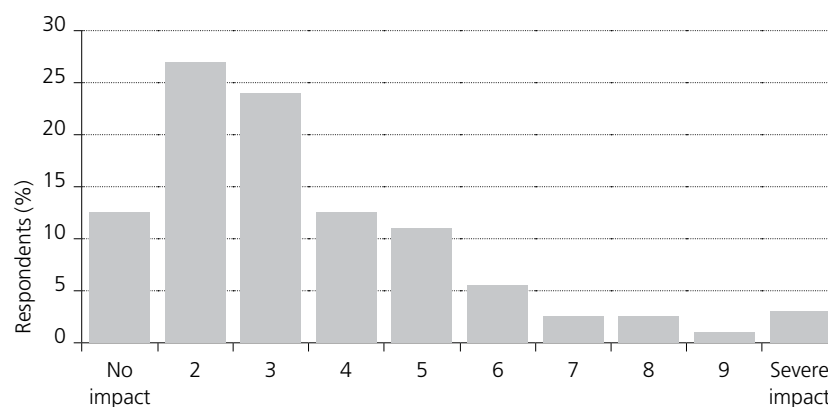
Figure 3: Impact of actual or perceived criminal, violent or unlawful act on quality of life of respondent (scale of 1 to 10)

Household survey respondents were asked to rate the extent to which crime had affected their quality of life on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 representing no impact and 10 representing a severe impact. Figure 3 shows that on average, respondents were of the opinion that crime had had an impact on their lives, but that it was not that severe. Nonetheless, it is notable that approximately 20 percent of the population rated the impact of crime and injustice at 5 or higher, i.e. a medium to severe impact. This suggests that although crime may not have reached 'epidemic' proportions, it remains a major cause of instability for a significant proportion of the population.

Table 9: Mean impact of crime by various demographic indicators

Household characteristics		Self-rated impact (mean)
Location	Rural	3.39
	Urban	3.65
Household has experienced crime*	No incidence happened	3.15
	Faced incidence	3.95
Religion	Muslim	3.44
	Other religion	3.53
Ethnicity	Bengali	3.45
	Ethnic minority	3.69
Household food sufficiency status	Chronic deficit	3.19
	Occasional deficit	3.41
	No surplus	3.39
	Surplus	3.73
Respondents' sex	Male	3.41
	Female	3.50

* Household experienced at least one incidence of crime in last two years

There was relatively little difference in response according to gender, religion, or ethnicity, although as might be expected, women, non-Muslims, and non-Bengalis did report that crime had a slightly higher impact on their lives (Table 9). Factors where there were more obvious differences were location (higher impact of crime in urban areas), level of food sufficiency (self-rated impact of crime appears to rise as people become more food sufficient), and most notably personal experience, with those households that had personally experienced crime understandably reporting that crime had a bigger impact on their lives.

There may be at least three possible reasons for the finding that the majority of people rate crime as having an impact on their lives, but not a severe one. The first and most obvious explanation is that crime really is not such a severe problem for the majority of Bangladeshis, at least when compared to other more elemental matters of daily survival. This argument is supported by responses concerning the most serious problems and security threats they face (Section 2.2). Secondly, it may very well be the case that timing matters. This survey was carried out in October and November 2007, nine months after the Caretaker Government had come to power and established a sense of security. It is possible that if a similar survey had been carried out in December 2006, for example, when the overall situation in the country was more unstable, responses about crime could have been more negative. This links to the third factor, which is that 'crime, injustice and unlawful acts' are very wide terms that may be interpreted in many different ways. If there is any truth to the argument above that many Bangladeshis have 'hard-wired' responses to certain forms of crime, such as property theft, because they have no expectation that it can be prevented, it is possible that people are so inured to certain types of insecurity that they no longer really perceive its impact.

4.2.2 **Personal property crimes**

Personal property crimes include theft, robbery (i.e. theft using violence or intimidation), dacoity (armed robbery), and burglary (i.e. theft from property).

There are no reliable statistics on the prevalence of theft in Bangladesh. Table 10 presents official statistics in recent years for the crimes of burglary, robbery and theft.

Table 10: Official statistics for burglary, robbery and theft 2003–2007

Crime	Source	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Burglary	BD Police	3,883	3,356	3,270	2,991	4,439
Dacoity	BD Police	949	885	796	795	1,047
	RAB	–	–	192	306	–*
Robbery	BD Police	1,170	1,207	898	843	1,298
	RAB	–	885	–	–	–*
Theft	BD Police	8,234	8,605	8,101	8,332	12,015
	RAB	–	–	3,346	5,068	–*

* combined totals for 2007 not available as research went to publication
Sources: Websites of the Bangladesh Police[44] and the Rapid Action Battalion[45]

There are various reasons to doubt the validity of these statistics. Firstly, the figures appear extremely low in comparison to perceptions of theft and to the frequency of theft reported by the household survey. There were 346 incidences of theft among 2,000 households over a two-year period (Table 7). If this was spread equally over two years, this would suggest that an average of 173 thefts per 2,000 households occur per year (8.65 percent of households). By contrast, even at the highest rate of recorded theft in 2007, police statistics report 12,015 thefts for a country of at least 20 million households – which corresponds to approximately 0.06 percent of households experiencing theft each year. It is unlikely that personal property crime is this low given the responses of participants documented in the household survey, thus in actuality *only a minority (even as much as 1 in every 140) of thefts are reported to the Police*. This differential is most likely explained by people not believing there is any point in informing the police about such 'petty' crime as they have no hope that this will bring any positive benefits (see Section 6.2.1 on the Police below).

Secondly, no information has been provided about how these crime statistics are recorded and tabulated. This makes it difficult to know how policemen decide to classify a particular incident as a theft (or, for example, as a burglary or robbery, or something else, or not record it at all), how they are collated at the district and national level, what proportion of thefts are solved, etc.

Despite the unreliability of these statistics, it is worth noting that police statistics reported a significant rise in crime in 2007. This may seem worrying at first glance, but it may however suggest something more positive. Combined with the findings that there is a strong belief that crime fell considerably in 2007 (Table 8), the rise in recorded theft, burglary and robbery is much more likely to indicate increased public willingness to report crime. Nonetheless, it remains certain that most theft goes unreported.

As a point of contrast, it may be noted that the media survey demonstrated that the level of robbery and theft that was reported in the media from October 2006 to September 2007 fluctuated, but did not show a marked downwards trend (Table 11). These figures should also be treated with caution, as only the most newsworthy robberies and thefts are likely to have been reported, and also that the media will usually only report crimes that have already been recorded by the police.

44 <http://www.police.gov.bd/crime.php>, accessed 9 April 2008.
45 <http://www.rab.gov.bd/crime.php>, accessed 9 April 2008.

In 2007 however, there were regular stories in the news about organised groups of thieves and muggers known as the *malam* ('gel' or 'ointment') and *aggyan* ('senseless') 'parties'. These gangs operate in city areas, snatching money and other valuables from people using public transport (particularly baby taxis or 'CNGs', but also taxis and buses) and pedestrians. The '*malam* party' is reported to rub powder chilli or poisonous ointments and gels into the victim's eyes, temporarily blinding the victim so that they can rob them more easily. Meanwhile, the 'senseless party' drugs people with a liquid that leaves them senseless. There were about 250 reported incidents in Dhaka and other cities between October 2006 and September 2007, including 14 deaths.

Table 11: Incidents of theft and robbery reported in nine national newspapers, October 2006–September 2007

Month	Incidents of robbery	Incidents of theft
October 2006	23	52
November 2006	32	65
December 2006	19	73
January 2007	13	11
February 2007	26	103
March 2007	33	99
April 2007	28	87
May 2007	27	82
June 2007	22	112
July 2007	41	114
August 2007	14	67
September 2007	36	39
Total	**314**	**904**

In addition, the threat of personal property crime can have as much of a negative impact on human security as actual instances. It is not just actual incidences of theft, burglary and robbery that cause insecurity, however, but also the threat of such crimes occurring. A recent article by Naomi Hossein argues that although the frequency of such crimes is actually relatively low, especially when compared to other countries with similar levels of poverty, the fear of personal property crime still has an adverse effect on people's behaviour.

'You sleep unhygienically next to your cow so it is not stolen overnight… You flatter and pay off the local chairman so next hungry season he will recover your stolen crop for you. You never really get ahead of the game because you have to cut off your nose to spite your face'.[46]

Therefore, in addition to threats to individuals' physical and emotional well-being through personal property crimes, further concerns relating to both 'freedom from want' and 'freedom from fear' can also be identified. For example, victims of personal property crime may suffer economic deprivation as a result; the threat of crime may also create further human insecurity, as certain theft avoidance measures adopted by individuals may waste valuable resources (including time and effort) and unconsciously force them into acting in ways which limit their freedom and development. While the security of victims has been concentrated on in this section, it is also important to note that 'freedom from want' is also likely to prove a significant motivation to many petty offenders.

46   Hossain N, 'The Price We Pay' in *The Daily Star Forum Magazine* (Dhaka), Volume 3 Issue 1, January 2008.

4.2.3 **Armed violence**   Table 12 presents available figures for murder, acid violence,[47] arms-related and explosives offences.

Table 12: Statistics on incidence of murder, acid violence, arms-related and explosive offences

Crime	Source	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Murder	BD Police	3,471	3,902	3,592	4,166	3,863
	RAB	–	2,054	534	1,171	–*
	Media survey	–	–	–	–	423[†]
Acid violence incidents	Acid Survivors Foundation	335	266	214	180	114[‡]
	Ain o Shalish Kendra[§]	–	–	–	–	95
	Media survey	–	–	–	–	100†
Arms-related offences	BD Police	2,293	2,370	1,836	1,552	1,746
	RAB	–	–	437	507	–*
Explosives offences	BD Police	499	477	595	308	232

* combined totals for 2007 not available as research went to publication
† October 2006–November 2007
‡ January–September 2007
§ Ain o Shalish Kendra figures are also based on media surveys.

All of these figures must be treated with a large degree of caution. Again, it is unclear how the numbers given by the RAB relate to the figures provided by the Police, and it is difficult to evaluate the extent to which the figures provided reflect actual levels of crime. It is also not certain exactly what constitutes arms-related and explosives offences in this table – the police statistics refer to arrests under the relevant laws (the Arms Act and the Explosives Act) but do not detail what kind of crimes this involves.[48] Moreover, the numbers from the media survey are in no way comprehensive and are meant as a point of comparison and a way of showing what proportion of such crimes gets reported in the national press.

Although the numbers for arms- and explosives-related offences give an idea of how many people have been arrested, they do not reveal much about levels of arms proliferation or use of IEDs and other explosives.

Research undertaken for this survey suggests that a considerable proportion of violence that people have personally experienced did not include firearms or IEDs. Household survey respondents whose households had suffered violence were asked to describe what form of violence they experienced and what weapons, if any, were used. The results can be found in Table 13, which suggests that the majority of violent acts do not actually involve a weapon: across 2,000 households, there were only 22 reported incidents involving firearms, with sticks and knives being more common weapons.

This implies that there is not a high level of weapons proliferation within society as a whole.

This is reinforced by two further findings. Only 1.8 percent of respondents (35 out of 2,000) reported having seen illegal weapons in public in the last six months. Secondly, when asked to estimate what proportion of households owned a weapon (Table 14), most people had no idea, which might in itself suggest that the problem is not widespread; only three percent of respondents thought that more than 10 percent of households in Bangladesh own a firearm.

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47 Acid violence, i.e. throwing acid with the intention of causing permanent disfigurement, has been a high-profile issue in Bangladesh in recent years, in part because of powerful campaigning by non-governmental organisations such as the Acid Survivors Foundation. The Government has tried to reduce acid violence through the Acid Control Act and Acid Crime Control Act, both passed in 2002, though some key informants suggested they are not thoroughly implemented. In recent years there has been a slight drop in the number of incidents of acid violence. The profile of victims is changing, with less young girls suffering (though they are still the majority of victims) and more males now also being targeted.

48 It is probable that the murder rate is more accurate than many of the other statistics, since the severity of the crime means that it is much more likely to be reported.

Table 13: Types of weapons used in acts of violence experienced by households

Use of arms during violence	No.	(%) of incidents in which experienced violence
Used no weapons	80	39
Stick/something to beat with	59	29
Knife	29	14
Firearms	22	11
Screw driver/stabbing implement	4	2
Stone	3	2
Household utensils (Bottles, glass)	1	1
Total	**234**	**97**

Table 14: Responses to the question: What percentage of households in Bangladesh do you think own a firearm?

	No.	%
Less than 3 percent of households	191	10
3–5 percent of households	167	8
6–10 percent of households	58	3
More than 10 percent of households	52	3
Don't know	1,531	77
Total	**1,999**	**100**

While these findings suggest that civilian arms possession is not a major issue in Bangladesh; it is nevertheless clear that there are problems relating to arms proliferation and control. There are regular reports in the newspapers about arms seizures, mostly by the RAB but also by the Police. Table 15 shows how many arms and explosives were recovered between October 2006 and September 2007 according to the media survey, and also quotes official statistics on arms recoveries by the RAB from its foundation up to December 2007. No detailed statistics on arms and explosives seizures/recoveries by the Police were available. Again, these figures should be treated with caution, but they indicate clearly that illegal weapons are in circulation within the country.

Table 15: Quantities of arms and explosives recovered

Description	Media survey (10/06–09/07)	RAB (to 12/07)*
Total Arms	6,513	3,592
Total Ammunitions	118,161	38,734
Total Explosives	2,863	26.645 kg
Power Gel (For Explosives)	1,076 & 9 kg	292 & 91.3 kg
Detonator	32	7685
Improvised Grenade Body (Iron)	1,405	(no figure)
Grenade Head	480	97
Ammonium Nitrate (For Explosives)	1.556 kg	136.4 kg

* RAB statistics are given 'to 12/07' but it is not totally clear from exactly which date these statistics commence; it is most likely to be at or around the foundation of RAB in April 2004.

Bangladesh is believed to lie on the path of several international arms trafficking routes. It has a very large coastal border that is difficult to protect fully against smuggling and trafficking; securing parts of its land border are also a challenge, particularly in the hilly intersection with Myanmar (Burma) and India in the south-east of the country. Many of the focus group participants in the two main cities in this area, Chittagong and Cox's Bazar, were of the strong opinion that weapons were indeed flowing into or through the country. Port workers in Chittagong recalled the most high-profile case of arms seizures, when ten truckloads of arms and ammunition were

discovered at the Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Ltd jetty on 2 April 2004 (this case has yet to be resolved, and in February 2008 a fresh investigation was launched into how such huge quantities of weapons came into the country[49]). It was suggested that this capture represents just a fraction of the real amount of weapons that might be passing through the port.

Participants in Cox's Bazar also believed that most of the weapons coming into the area were being trafficked onwards. However, they thought that some weapons were finding their way into the hands of religious militant groups in Bangladesh, and even claimed that there were militant training camps within their division. Trafficking is also an issue in the south-west corner of the country which borders with the Indian state of West Bengal.

Focus group participants in Jessore linked arms trafficking to wider patterns in smuggling. They said that poor women are often enticed into smuggling, starting with cheaper, less sensitive goods such as saris. Once they become skilled at such smuggling and have already started to think of it as a way of earning a living, they are gradually encouraged into trafficking of more dangerous items, including arms and drugs. This also implies that there are strong linkages between arms trafficking and drug trafficking, though little concrete information is available on whether it is exactly the same gangs that are involved.

From the findings of the survey, it is therefore apparent that while arms proliferation is not generally perceived to be a major concern for the majority of people (with only about one percent of respondents listing the availability of firearms as one of their five biggest concerns (Figure 1 in Section 2.2)), availability can potentially play a considerable role in causing insecurity. This is because a variety of criminal factions are able to access weapons for use in illicit activities, for example organised crime and political agitation. Similarly, explosives and IEDs such as Molotov cocktails and nail bombs are of particular concern in terms of political insecurity since they can be used to create terror and panic at relatively little expense. Table 16 lists the number of reported injuries caused by IED explosions recorded by the media survey. It is notable that there has been a considerable drop in the number of explosions reported since the Caretaker Government came to power, though as argued in the Conclusion (Chapter 8), the reduction in violence in 2007 most likely reflects a temporary lull based on the political situation rather than a long-term improvement in security.

Armed violence is a clear threat to 'freedom from want' security, as it greatly devalues individuals' physical and emotional well-being, as well as potentially limiting access to social mechanisms relating to governance and justice. Nevertheless, it is also important not to disregard the strong linkages between armed violence and 'freedom from want'. For example, instances of armed violence can potentially limit economic security by depriving a household of its primary income; actual use of force resulting in injury or death can prevent an otherwise healthy person from gaining employment, while extortion collected as a result of the threat of violence can similarly reduce the available income of a household. This insecurity can in turn devalue health and food security.

This suggests that more concerted action is needed in order to tighten arms control and to maintain the reduction in IED explosions. It appears that the authorities can rely on public support for such activities. The household survey found that over 85 percent of respondents thought that an amnesty to collect illegal weapons had the potential to be successful (Figure 4). The most popular agencies to undertake weapons collection were the RAB and the Armed Forces, with the Police also seen as a possible candidate.[50] A vital first step to improving arms control is the updating of legislation on arms control. A short study on arms proliferation in 2006 noted that arms control

49 Al Mahmud A, 'Fresh probe ordered to find real culprits' in *The Daily Star* (Dhaka), 13 February 2008.
50 Respondents were asked which agencies should be involved in collecting weapons; multiple answers were allowed. The three most popular answers were RAB (82 percent), the Armed Force (73 percent) and the Police (55 percent).

was still managed under the 1878 Arms Act.[51] This is clearly inadequate for modern usage, and a new governing arms management is urgently required to update provisions on the usage, storage, licensing, sale, and transfer of arms. There is also no permanent inter-agency body established to co-ordinate the development and implementation of arms control policy.

Table 16: Number of IED-related injuries* reported in national press, October 2006–September 2007

Month	Political clashes	Blasts at Academic Institutions	Attacks on Law Enforcers	Attacks on other officials†	Total
October 2006	44	12	2	4	62
November 2006	37	10	3	7	57
December 2006	6	41	8	5	60
January 2007	2	11	0	0	13
February 2007	0	1	0	0	1
March 2007	0	0	1	0	1
April 2007	0	2	0	0	2
May 2007	0	0	3	0	3
June 2007	0	1	2	0	3
July 2007	2	2	3	0	7
August 2007	4	1	1	0	6
September 2007	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**95**	**81**	**23**	**16**	**215**

* does not include IED-related deaths, which were tabulated into other tables depending on the context.

† e.g. representatives of the Armed Forces, Ansar, Village Defence Party and Fire Service, etc.
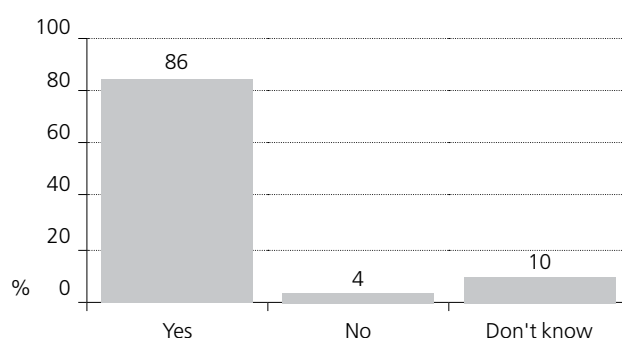
Figure 4: Views on the potential success of an amnesty on illegal arms

4.2.4 **Criminal groups**

Like any country, Bangladesh has a number of organised criminal groups involved in a range of illegal activities. One area where criminal groups seem to be highly engaged is smuggling and trafficking. No precise information was gathered for this research on such activities, but several key informants suggested that criminal groups were engaged in smuggling a variety of goods into and through the country, including both goods that can be sold legally (cigarettes, electrical equipment, etc.) and illegal items such as alcohol, firearms (see Section 4.2.3) and drugs (see Section 4.3). Human trafficking also takes place. This was seen to be a particularly serious problem in the south east of the country in Khulna Division.

Focus group participants also recounted stories of criminal groups (some of which developed out of disbanded militant left-wing groups) engaging in trafficking, but also using violence in order to try and control key economic resources. In 2007, the

51 National Forum Against Small Arms, South Asia Partnership – Bangladesh and Saferworld, *Challenges to Peace and Security: Consulting communities on small arms in Bangladesh*, (Saferworld, 2006), p 17.

Caretaker Government took strong measures to try and combat such organised crime, with the RAB taking the lead in targeting known criminals.

One other form of organised criminal activity that is more specific to Bangladesh is the *mastaan* ('muscleman'). *Mastaani* are best compared to gangsters. Like gangsters, they are engaged in a variety of illegal activities, including extortion, and use violence in order to enforce their position. Many key informants felt that the frequency and strength of *mastaani* had increased gradually over the last thirty years, as the state has been too weak to prevent their growth. They now appear to be virtually ubiquitous in slum areas.

Yet although *mastaani* are clearly a threat to security in many ways, their role is complex and it is doubtful whether simply arresting existing *mastaani* would by itself solve the problem. A World Bank report entitled 'Dhaka's Urban Poor' notes that *mastaani* have control over service delivery for all sorts of basic necessities in slum areas: 'the gap in service provision has been filled by *mastaans* who usually control the acquisition of and provision of amenities, such as latrines, tube-wells, water and electricity connections as well as interventions by NGOs in the slum.'[52] They also usually charge 'rent'. Once *mastaani* have this control, 'because [they] are often the only service provider in slum areas, the situation for residents is dire as they report regular extortion, and fear of physical harm or eviction if payoffs are not made.'[53]

There are many obstacles to removing this service delivery role from *mastaani*. For a start, as the same report notes, 'because most slums are not recognised as legal lands, the Government, NGOs and Donors generally do not provide services in these areas.'[54] NGOs that do try to work in the slums often need to maintain a relationship with a *mastaan* in order to be allowed to continue their activities. Secondly, it is widely believed that *mastaani* have connections with a range of people in authority, including policemen and politicians. These informal links create a range of disincentives to combating *mastaanism*. Moreover, the state currently lacks the resources to police all slum areas effectively (see Chapter 6) or to provide alternative services, making it very difficult to permanently exclude *mastaani* from controlling positions. All this suggests that the role of *mastaani* needs to be more carefully researched and understood and more nuanced approaches are required in order to combat the insecurity they create.

Criminal groups, thus, do not only cause 'freedom from fear' through crime-related insecurity, but also potentially undermine 'freedom from want' security by potentially devaluing capabilities (both physical and social) by restricting access to already limited amenities and trapping slum residents in a cycle of dependency.

4.3 Drug control

Drug control and abuse ranked as an unexpectedly high cause of concern. While drug abuse is a problem in almost every country in the world, the researchers did not anticipate the frequency with which this was raised by key informants and focus group participants. It has thus not been researched in detail. Given the level of worry that drugs appear to be causing, however, it is appropriate to look briefly at this issue.

Drug control may be divided here into two separate but related matters: drug addiction and abuse, and drug trafficking. Drug abuse was the fourth highest concern when people were asked about which threats to security and which crimes they were most worried about, and was also ranked as one of the highest overall problems facing people; in each case, 20-30 percent of respondents ranked drug abuse as one of the

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52 World Bank Office Dhaka, Dhaka: Improving Living Conditions for the Urban Poor, Bangladesh Development Series Paper No. 17, (World Bank, 2007), p 57
53 Ibid p 57.
54 Ibid p xvi.

main concerns (Section 2.2). Drug abuse was also frequently raised as an issue by key informants, both governmental and non-governmental.

There are several different types of drugs that are commonly used in Bangladesh. The most widely abused drug is considered to be Phensidyl, a codeine-based cough syrup that is illegal in Bangladesh but legal in India, to which many people have become addicted. Phensidyl is smuggled into the country from India, and it is also alleged that there are factories producing Phensidyl illegally. Heroin use has become more common in recent years, as have a variety of other injection drugs. It is estimated that there are now 20,000-25,000 injecting drug users in the country.[55] Marijuana usage is also common. Most of these drugs primarily affect poorer sections of the society, but one drug, Yaba, is currently fashionable among the young rich. Yaba is usually a mixture of methamphetamine and caffeine, and mostly comes into the country from Myanmar (Burma). In 2007, there were a number of high-profile arrests and Yaba seizures, which brought people's attention to the fact that drug abuse could affect all sections of the community.[56]

Drug abuse brings with it a variety of problems related to health, crime, and social stability. Key informants suggested that drug addiction was a particularly big risk among street children and in slum areas. Young children often begin by sniffing glue and then gradually going on to harder drugs. One civil society organisation working on drug rehabilitation conducted research that showed that 89 percent of the drug addicts they dealt with had first become involved with drugs before they were 20 years old, of which 39 percent were between the ages of 10 and 15 and 9 percent were younger than 10 years old.[57] Drug users are also at much higher risk of contracting HIV and other diseases. Although the Department of Narcotics Control (an agency under the Ministry of Home Affairs) supports some rehabilitation work, a number of key informants felt that there was still little understanding in Bangladesh as a whole that drug addiction was also a health issue and that combating drug abuse also requires health interventions.[58]

There is an obvious link between drug addiction and crime. Drugs cost money, which most drug addicts are unable to earn; research by APON (Ashokti Punorbashon Nibash) of 1,250 drug users found that about two-thirds spent more than Tk 100 a day on drugs[59] – a significant amount of money for most Bangladeshis. Inevitably, this leads some people into crime in order to pay for their drug addiction. Official statistics do not give a detailed breakdown of arrests for drug trafficking, as opposed to possession or other drug-related crime; the statistics below simply give a figure for all 'narcotics-related' offences (Table 17). Nonetheless, these demonstrate that drug-related crime is a significant issue.

Table 17: Official statistics for narcotics-related crime, 2003–2007

Crime	Source	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Narcotics	BD Police	9,494	9,505	14,195	15,479	15,622
	RAB	–	–	3,468	6,429	–*

* combined totals for 2007 not available as research went to publication

The media survey added up all reported cases of drug trafficking arrests (Table 18). Although these arrests clearly represent only a fraction of all drug-related trafficking, they are still revealing. It is not only men who are involved in trafficking, but also women and even children (as noted in the Section 4.2.3). This also raises another issue. It is also thought that there is an overlap between trafficking in drugs and trafficking in weapons, but little concrete is known about these linkages.

55 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime – Regional Office for South Asia, 'Bangladesh' in *South Asia - Regional Profile 2005*, (UNODC, 2005).
56 Rahman N, 'The Inevitable Crash' in *Star Weekend Magazine* (Dhaka), Volume 5 Issue 111, 8 September 2006.
57 Statistics from Ashokti Punorbashon Nibash (APON) for 1994-2004. <http://www.aponbd.org/research.html>, accessed 9 April 2008.
58 Anonymous interviewees, Dhaka, October/November 2007.
59 Statistics from Ashokti Punorbashon Nibash (APON); reference as above.

Table 18: Reported arrests for drug trafficking in national media, October 2006–September 2007

Month	Male	Female	Child (under 16)
October 2006	20	13	7
November 2006	12	5	0
December 2006	11	9	1
January 2007	13	12	2
February 2007	33	10	0
March 2007	10	12	2
April 2007	19	0	1
May 2007	5	0	0
June 2007	10	2	1
July 2007	13	5	2
August 2007	5	2	1
September 2007	3	4	2
Total	**154**	**74**	**19**

4.4 Tenure security

It is clear from the household survey that tenure insecurity is one of the most severe forms of insecurity facing many Bangladeshis. As the analysis below shows, tenure security is closely interlinked with many other forms of insecurity relating both to 'freedom from want' and 'freedom from fear'.

The term 'tenure insecurity' is used here to group together various issues relating to land ownership. These include:

■ Grabbing of land to which you believe you are legally entitled and have legal title (for example, through property documents);

■ Land grabbing where you believe you have rights to the land but may not be able to prove this (for example, occupation of land that has traditionally been settled by indigenous groups);

■ Land grabbing of common resources (for example, khas land and water resources), access to which is then restricted;

■ Landlessness (i.e. having no fixed abode, or living on land to which you have no legal claim);

■ Eviction from land on which you do not have full legal title (for example, slum clearances); and,

■ Loss of land/property due to riverbank erosion and other natural disasters (Section 5.4.2), with little or no support mechanisms in place.

In Table 2 in Section 2.2, dispute over properties was the third most frequent concern identified by respondents (35 percent). Land grabbing and being landless was also noted as a very significant cause of insecurity, with 15 percent listing this as a concern, while slum eviction was also reported as a problem by 7-8 percent of respondents in urban areas.

There are many causes of tenure insecurity. Most obviously, population density in Bangladesh is high and continues to grow, meaning that there is little 'spare' land and there is immense pressure on all available resources. Secondly, the system of property rights is open to abuse: there is no unified system of land registration, meaning that competing documents can easily be produced that both claim to prove ownership of the same piece of land. Corruption means that it is also easy to produce such

documents. Related to this, it is common for powerful, politically-connected people to 'grab' land with impunity, whether from other people or through occupation of common land. Thirdly, the legal system of arbitration is very ineffective, meaning that when land disputes do arise, there is a strong chance that they will not be dealt with quickly and adequately. Fourthly, there is currently no overall strategy for land use or spatial planning, which would clearly designate the state's overall vision on which land can be used for which purposes, or how to compensate those who suffer as a result of new development works, slum evictions, etc.

As in other areas, there are no accurate statistics available regarding the number of properties over which there are competing claims or the number of people that are affected. There is little doubt, however, that tenure insecurity, in its various forms, is a serious problem. It is thought that a very significant percentage of all cases going through the civil courts are related to property disputes – key informants estimated that 70 to 90 percent of the work of civil courts may be related to property cases, but no concrete statistics appear to be available.[60] This percentage is high both because of the sheer number of land disputes in the country, and because of the extreme slowness with which they are dealt with by the legal system. It is common to hear stories of land disputes that have dragged on for decades, sometimes even being passed on from generation to generation. One study into land disputes estimated that it takes an average of approximately nine and a half years to resolve a dispute.[61] When land disputes become entrenched with no resolution in sight, this sometimes results in families taking matters into their own hands. Again, no reliable statistics are available, but it is believed that it is not uncommon for land disputes to become violent.

Tenure insecurity is thus linked to several other human security problems, including: weak infrastructure and inability to provide basic services; environmental insecurities; poor governance, corruption, and weak access to justice. At a basic emotional level, secure property tenure is a major factor of psychological security. On a more practical level, in a largely rural society it is crucial for basic food and economic security.

Tenure insecurity undermines economic and social development in a number of ways. Most obviously, those who are landless or no longer have access to common resources (*khas* land and *haor* waters) have limited potential to provide for their own livelihoods, and are among the poorest and most vulnerable sections of society. On a wider scale, it may be argued that the lack of secure property rights discourages *all* sections of society from behaviour that would maximise the potential for long-term development. Without firm property rights, land cannot easily be used as an asset and its value leveraged into other productive activities.[62] There is also less incentive to make a long-term investment into methods to make the land (or the objects on it) more productive, whether this is in agriculture or industry. Given that, historically, whoever has been in power has seized land from political opponents and awarded it and other land to its supporters; there is also a 'churning' effect which prevents the build-up of large holdings which would have greater economies of scale.[63]

The extremely slow litigation process hinders development further, because it is a major drain on resources, not only because of legal fees but also because time spent in the court room is time that is not spent working (which is rarely compensated). As already noted, unresolved disputes over property can often descend into violence. However, tenure insecurity results not only in fights between individuals, but also in conflict at the community or national level. In some parts of the country there are indigenous groups that feel that they have rights over a certain area of land on which they have historically lived, even if they have no clear legal title. They are thus vulnerable when other groups move into their area and lay claim to their land. This is

60 Anonymous interviewees, Dhaka, October/November 2007.
61 Barkat A and Roy PK, *Political Economy of land Litigation in Bangladesh: A Case of Colossal National Wastage*, (ALRD, 2004).
62 Probably the most famous proponent of this line of argument is the Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto in *The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else*.(Random House, 2000)
63 Khan MH, *Bangladesh Human Security Assessment 2005*, (UK Department for International Development, 2007).

particularly so in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, where a wave of government-sponsored settlement in the late 1970s and 1980s is seen as being one of the key drivers of insecurity in the region.[64]

Tenure security is noted as a challenge in the 2005 Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) entitled 'Unlocking the Potential: National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction'. It states that 'there has been a growing realisation that the critical policy issues pertaining to land have to do with land administration reform and a rational land use policy'[65] and that 'the present system of land administration is beset with serious problems and is unable to cope with the demands placed on it by a growing population and increased developmental needs'.[66] It notes that in response to these challenges, the Government introduced a new land use policy and proposes to introduce a Certificate of Legal Ownership at the heart of the land registration system. Due to the limited time and resources available for this research, it was not possible to ascertain the exact status of these initiatives or to what extent they are being implemented. It seems certain, however, that tenure insecurity will continue to be a major source of insecurity for many Bangladeshis in the near future.

4.5 Political security

Levels of personal and community security are affected not only by crime and other forms of injustice, but also by the wider political situation in the country. This is partly about the stability of the political system; there is often a degree of violent political unrest in Bangladesh, and this makes the public feel more insecure, as was demonstrated clearly in late 2006 and early 2007. It is also partly about the quality of governance, i.e. the state's ability to provide security and prevent crime. There are also more direct forms of political insecurity, i.e. threats, violence and crime that are in some way politically motivated or are a direct product of the political system.

This section looks at three types of political insecurity: direct political violence (i.e. violence and insecurity directly related to factional political competition); the politicisation of universities, which is part of this factional political competition but deserves special mention; and terrorism and extremism, whether motivated by religious or political ideologies.

4.5.1 Direct political violence

'Direct political violence' is taken here to mean violence and insecurity that is directly related to the political system, and factional political competition between the main political parties. This includes violence around elections, clashes between party activists, and *hartals* (politically motivated strikes). It was also suggested by some key informants that the political system generates a certain level of violence against minorities, who are often used as scapegoats in order to mobilise core constituencies (Section 5.3).

There has been significant insecurity and instability around most elections in Bangladesh's history. Despite a succession of elected governments since 1991, it appears that the democratic process has not yet become fully embedded and free of improper influence. Nearly all elections have suffered from accusations of corruption and misuse of resources, and threats by opposition parties to boycott the elections or the resulting

64 Although the ongoing tension in the Chittagong Hill Tracts does not appear to seriously affect most people's human security, it nonetheless undermines human security in at least three ways. Firstly, the need to station large numbers of Armed Forces and other security personnel in the region is a drain on much-needed resources which could otherwise be deployed for social and economic development. Secondly, the 'frozen conflict' weakens the integrity of the political system and draws attention to the challenge of respecting the rights of all communities. Thirdly, it complicates border management in an already difficult section of the border, with implications for drugs control, combating arms trafficking and the prevention of terrorism.

65 Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh – General Economics Division Planning Commission, *Unlocking the Potential: National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction*, (Government of Bangladesh, 2005), Section 4.47.

66 Ibid, Section 4.48.

parliaments. Parties have also mobilised support through street demonstrations, which have sometimes led to clashes between party activists from opposing parties.

This was particularly evident at the end of 2006, as the AL-led opposition alleged that the forthcoming elections would not be free or fair and stated that it would boycott them. There were major clashes between rival supporters on the streets of Dhaka that left thousands injured (Table 19). This violence deepened the political crisis which led to the establishment of the Caretaker Government and the imposition of a state of emergency, which included a ban of political activity. This explains the huge drop in political violence since January 2007, with the majority of arrests since then related to clashes in academic institutions that took place in August 2007.

Table 19: Political violence (including armed violence and arson) reported in the media, October 2006–September 2007

Months	Injured	Killed	Arrested*	Kidnapped
October 2006	3,096	77	108	0
November 2006	2,116	36	62	5
December 2006	1,744	21	100	0
January–September 2007	310	0	240	0
Total	**7,266**	**134**	**510**	**5**

*   This does not include mass arrests of opposition political activists by the Government in October-December 2007 which it claimed would help to stem the violence. Most were released within a few days and there are no dependable figures on the number of arrests.

Another aspect of this direct political violence is the frequent use of *hartals*. A 2005 study of *hartals* by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), defines a *hartal* as:

'The temporary suspension of work in business premises, offices and educational institutions and movement of vehicular traffic nationally, regionally or locally as a mark of protest against actual or perceived grievances called by a political party or parties or other demand groups'.[67]

Hartals have their roots in political resistance in colonial times and are common across South Asia. In recent years, however, they have been used increasingly frequently by a variety of political interest groups, mostly (but not always) linked to the main political parties.[68] *Hartals* that successfully shut down a city (or a region of a city) cause huge temporary disruption to the economy, to education and to daily life more generally. The UNDP study estimates that the average cost of *hartals* to the economy during the 1990s was about three to four percent of GDP.[69]

Due to the ban on political activity throughout 2007, there was a very major drop in direct political violence. However, there is a high risk that such violence could re-emerge as 2008 progresses. The current situation is underpinned by a state of emergency. The Caretaker Government has repeatedly indicated that it does not intend to maintain this state of emergency indefinitely, but it is unclear what will happen when it is relaxed or removed.

It is impossible to predict how political parties (and their supporters) will behave around the holding of new elections at the end of 2008, particularly if the state of emergency is removed, and the pre-election period is likely to be very tense. One key informant suggested that there are powerful constituencies (some sections of the current elite and some terrorist groups) that do not want to see a free and fair election

67 United Nations Development Programme, *Beyond Hartals: Towards Democratic Dialogue in Bangladesh*, (UNDP, 2005), p 15.
68 The UNDP study uses data which suggests that until 1986, *hartals* were relatively infrequent, but became much more frequent in the latter stages of General Ershad's rule and have become even more widespread since then (p 17). The study also estimated which groups were responsible for calling *hartals* and found that the majority were linked to political parties, their associated student leagues, and alliances linked to these parties.
69 UNDP, *Beyond Hartals*, p 2.

succeed, and that these may seek to directly or indirectly escalate insecurity in order to undermine these elections.[70]

The Government is attempting to reduce this risk in a number of ways. Firstly, it has revamped the Election Commission and is updating the whole electoral system, particularly by updating voter registration lists across the country. It is hoped that this will increase trust in the electoral system and thus limit the potency of any accusations of vote-rigging or other electoral fraud, leading to a result that is accepted by all parties.

Secondly, it is making plans to maintain security around the election period (before, during and after) in order to prevent public disturbances. This is likely to include large-scale deployment of the Armed Forces.

Thirdly, it has attempted to force the main political parties to 'clean up their act'. Large numbers of senior party representatives have been arrested, largely on corruption charges, including the leaders of the two main parties. The Caretaker Government has put pressure on the parties to reform themselves in a number of ways, such as increasing their 'internal democracy' by opening up decision-making and appointments to more voting and scrutiny and removing corrupt cadres from the party. This has met with considerable resistance by the party machines. It is still too early to say whether pressure from the Caretaker Government will have any positive impact in encouraging political parties to behave more responsibly; several key informants feared that any reforms would be merely cosmetic and that since the underlying political system remains largely unchanged, there are strong incentives to return to old methods of seeking and exercising political power.[71]

Direct political violence therefore has manifold implications for human security, as instability and conflict between political parties undermines both 'freedom from want' security (for example, economic and social development) and 'freedom from fear' security (physical and emotional well-being). Accordingly, in disrupting effective governance, the public is left insecure as the fulfilment of basic quantitative and qualitative needs are hindered in their delivery.

4.5.2 Politically-based insecurity in higher education

The Bangladesh Human Security Assessment 2005 (BHSA2005) argues that factional political competition was a 'cross-cutting driver of insecurity' which has politicised the administrative and judicial systems and adversely affected many aspects of daily life.[72] The higher education system is just one element of this wider politicisation, yet it is one that is particularly high-profile and deserves special attention due to the important role that universities play within society, both as educators of the future elite of the country and as cauldrons of political activity.

Student politics have played an important role in national history dating back to the establishment of the Chhatra League, the student wing of the AL, in the early days of East Pakistan. Students were central to the Bangla language movement and in the protests for independence from West Pakistan. Yet as factional competition has developed between the main parties in Bangladesh, it has also been transposed into university life. The three biggest parties in Bangladesh all have powerful student wings: the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL, linked to the AL); the *Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal* (JCD or 'National Student Party', linked to the Bangladesh Nationalist Party or BNP); and the *Islami Chhatra Shibir* (ICS or 'Islamic Students Camp', which is considered the student wing of *Jamaat-e-Islami* although no formal linkage exists).

There have been regular clashes between these student parties in recent years. For example, in July 2006 BCL and JCD fought openly with ICS in clashes at Jagannath

70 Anonymous interviewee, Dhaka, October/November 2007.
71 Anonymous interviewees, Dhaka, October/November 2007.
72 Op cit Khan MH.

University which left over 100 people injured,[73] while in December 2006 the BCL and JCD battled each other with 'blank gunshots and blasted hand bombs and used lethal weapons and brickbats'.[74]

Student politics has continued to be volatile even under the current Caretaker Government. The first major insecurity since the state of emergency was imposed came when violent student protests erupted in August 2007. The problems started when students at the University of Dhaka launched protests demanding the removal of an army camp that was based on the university campus after servicemen were alleged to have beaten up three students. Three days of escalating violence followed and unrest started to spread to universities in other cities. This led to renewed fears of political instability in the country, but the situation was calmed after the Government imposed a temporary curfew. Student politics appears to remain volatile, with fresh reports of clashes between student groups emerging. On 10 February 2008, for example, clashes broke out between BCL and ICS which were reported to have caused at least 40 injuries.[75]

These clashes would be concerning enough even if it was only party activists that suffered. However, the effects of this aggressive competition between the student wings have a much wider impact on university life. Many students are drawn into this political competition from the moment that they enter the university. There is insufficient accommodation at student dormitories, and the dormitories are controlled by one student group or another. In order to get accommodation, therefore, newly-enrolled students are often forced to show political allegiances. This then exposes them to pressure throughout their university career. For example, party activists often try to force other students to participate in demonstrations and *hartals* (or threaten them in order that they do not support opposition demonstrations).

Demonstrations and *hartals* cause enormous disruption to the education system. They usually succeed in shutting down the university for at least half-a-day or a whole day. More serious disturbances (such as those in August 2007) can result in universities being closed for several weeks. This happens so frequently that study courses and examinations almost always fall behind their original schedule and are constantly being rearranged. This severely disrupts the continuity and quality of the education on offer and also creates an uncertain atmosphere for students and lecturers alike. Accordingly, university violence is a significant cause for concern as it threatens the physical and emotional security of both those directly involved in student politics, and also those that are not. It also greatly devalues the capability of universities to be able to ensure the provision of adequate education and a safe social environment within which students can pursue opportunities and choices, free from external influence.

Despite this, there have so far been few initiatives to curb the politicisation of student life or restrict the power of the student parties. This is presumably because the same incentives to continue the current system apply to student politics as they do more generally in the national political system; whoever is in power has an interest in patronising their respective student wing in order to extend their power, while opposition parties equally see benefit in supporting their student wings as a further means of resistance against whoever is in power. The fact that universities are mostly private and that there is no unified legislation on managing tertiary education also complicates the task of developing a coordinated policy on reducing violence on campus.[76] As a result, such disturbances continue with shocking regularity, causing both short-term political insecurity and long-term damage to human development because people's education has suffered.

73 '100 hurt as BCL, JCD jointly fight Shibir' in *The Daily Star* (Dhaka), 18 July 2006.
74 'BCL, JCD clash in Barisal' in *The Daily Star* (Dhaka), 4 December 2006.
75 'Shibir, BCL men clash openly with lethal arms' in *The Daily Star* (Dhaka), 11 February 2008.
76 Anonymous interviewee, Dhaka, October/November 2007.

4.5.3 **Terrorism and extremism**

Terrorism and extremism are essentially political in nature, since they have certain ideological goals which they hope to promote through the threat of, or actual use of violence (thus distinguishing 'terrorism' from criminals who use similar tactics to intimidate their victims). Terrorism affects political stability and security, both directly through the violence and suffering it causes and indirectly through the way in which it can poison the political atmosphere (resulting in similar negative cross-cutting human security impacts documented through Section 4.5). It also clearly affects personal security, since victims of terrorism are innocent civilians (even in cases where attacks are targeted on government officials). Terrorists' weapons of choice are explosives and IEDs (see Section 4.2.3), which can create a wide climate of fear as people go about their daily life.

There are two main types of terrorism in Bangladesh: left-wing militancy and religious/fundamentalist terror. Until recently, left-wing militancy was seen as the bigger threat, while religious/fundamentalist terrorism was not given so much attention. However, since the *Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh* (JMB) case in August 2005, religious/fundamentalist terrorism has received much greater attention from both the authorities and the media.

Left-wing militancy still exists in Bangladesh, but its potency has been much reduced in recent years. It has not all disappeared, however; one governmental key informant estimated that there were over ten radical Marxist groups still operating in the country. Most of these groups operate in Khulna Division in the south-west of Bangladesh. They maintain links with similar groups over the border in India (particularly West Bengal), where left-wing militancy has remained a potent force.[77] Another key informant suggested that despite their professed political stance, many of these groups had in fact mutated into purely criminal operations.[78]

These days, it is religious/fundamentalist terrorism that is seen as a more significant threat to stability. This comes in the wake of the bombings organised by the JMB on 17 August 2005, which generated considerable shock across the country and within the political elite. The attack involved the detonation of approximately 459 bombs in about 300 locations in 63 of Bangladesh's 64 districts. Although only two people died in these bombings, it showed that the JMB had the capacity to organise large-scale operations without the knowledge of the authorities. The 17 August 2005 explosions were not the first Islamist terrorist attack in Bangladesh, but they demonstrated that Islamist extremism now had the capacity to cause large-scale damage, and were described by several key informants, both governmental and non-governmental, as a 'wake-up call'.

In the months following these bombings, huge investigations were launched which led to many arrests and trials; by November 2007, 233 cases had been prepared for court, of which 54 had already been completed (resulting in 35 death sentences and 71 people being sentenced to life imprisonment).[79] On 30 March 2007, six top JMB militants were executed, although this was linked to another case surrounding the killing of two judges. This included two of its main leaders, Maulana Abdur Rahman and Siddiqul Islam, more commonly known as 'Bangla Bhai'.

As well as these investigations, the Government has undertaken a variety of other steps to show that it is taking the terrorist threat seriously. It has moved to strengthen its intelligence and investigation on extremist activity and has arrested and shut down several other Islamist groups. The media survey recorded a total of 269 people being arrested in relation to religious extremism between October 2006 and September 2007, while statistics from media monitoring done by civil society organisation Ain o Shalish Kendra recorded 594 arrests in 2007, including 260 JMB, 62 Harkatul Jihad, 42 Allar Dal and 31 Hijbut Tawhid members.[80]

77 Anonymous interviewee, Dhaka, October/November 2007.
78 Anonymous interviewee, Dhaka, October/November 2007.
79 Government official, Dhaka, November 2007.
80 Ain o Shalish Kendra, *Statistics of Human Rights Violations 2007* (in Bangla). <http://www.askbd.org/ Statistics%20of%20HRVs.pdf>, accessed 9 April 2008.

At the same time, there has been much debate in the media and in expert circles about the longer-term causes of terrorism in Bangladesh and what can be done to prevent extremist ideologies from developing. Many key informants were ready to discuss these issues, and there was a considerable degree of agreement on some of the main factors that have allowed fundamentalist views space to grow. According to these key informants, the main problem is education.

The education system was seen to be a major contributing factor to the growth of extremist views. Education is effectively divided into three different streams. Children coming from the wealthiest families (in urban areas) usually go to English-language schools. The majority of schools are Bangla-language, but there is a perception that the quality of education in many of these schools is not as high. The third form of schooling is madrasah-based, and pupils tend to come from poorer families because the madrasahs are free and offer basic education, food, and care. Madrasahs have operated outside the official schooling system and have not been required to follow any set curriculum (though this is now changing).

Many key informants considered this educational system to be divisive. Those who go to English-language schools have the best opportunities, but are often seen as being elitist and cut off from the mainstream of Bangladeshi society. Meanwhile, in many madrasahs there is a focus on religious education without a similar emphasis on other forms of learning. The danger is that this produces students who are in one sense highly educated, but lack skills that can easily be applied in employment. This in turn generates anger and frustration, which can make some madrasah graduates easy targets for recruitment to militant Islamist organisations.[81]

Education is only one factor, however. Other reasons suggested include: the influence of global trends towards religious extremism, including the radicalisation of disaffected second/third generation South Asians in the West; the anger generated by the 'War on Terror', which is often perceived as a war against Muslims; the weakness of home-grown Islamic teaching; corruption among the main political parties which had generated disillusionment with conventional politics; the manipulation of small religious groups by the main parties in order to gain political advantage; and poorly monitored funding channelled through some Islamic NGOs in the late 1990s/early 2000s.[82]

Nonetheless, it is important not to exaggerate the threat of Islamist terrorism, nor to equate growing religiosity and the practice of stricter forms of Islam, especially among the middle classes, with extremist thought. BHSA2005 argued that 'exaggerating the threat of Islamist radicalism is counterproductive' and that 'over-emphasising the latent danger of international Islamist networks entering Bangladesh is paradoxically likely to actually encourage the emergence of new Islamist factions and the alignment of existing factions with international Islamist forces to increase the price they can extract for supporting mainstream coalitions'.[83] Certainly, the threat of terrorism should not be ignored, but it is notable that terrorism was barely mentioned as a concern in the household survey (though this may have been influenced by the format of the questions asked) or the focus group discussions.

81 Anonymous interviewees, Dhaka, October/November 2007.
82 Anonymous interviewees, Dhaka, October/November 2007.
83 Op cit Khan MH.

5

Human security for vulnerable groups

THE PREVIOUS TWO CHAPTERS have detailed eight forms of insecurity that together might be said to make up the main elements of human security for the population as a whole. It has already been noted, however, that different groups and communities experience human security differently and have different concerns, including: location, gender, religion, ethnic group and level of education. It is not possible to explore the human security of all these groups in detail, but this section does look at some broad groups of people that may have different experiences of human security.
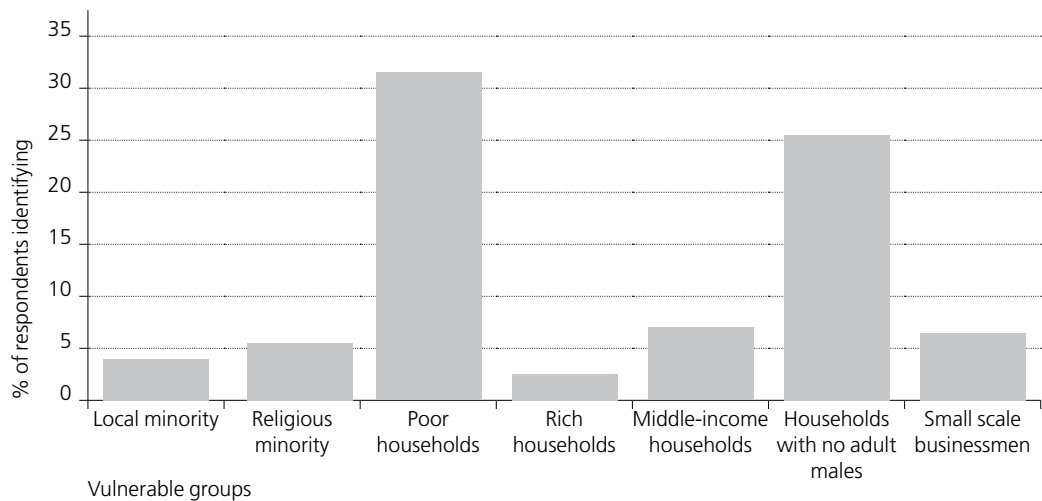
Figure 5: Groups considered most vulnerable to violence/abuse/unlawful acts

The household survey undertaken for this research asked respondents which groups they thought to be most vulnerable to crime, violence and unlawful acts (Figure 5). This identified two groups that were seen to be most at risk: poor households, and households with no adult males. The latter category was also identified as one of the most vulnerable groups by one key informant, who estimated that about 10 percent of households (2 to 3 million households) were female-headed households, largely because of the death of the husband or family breakdown. The key informant argued that such households are overwhelmingly poor and marginalised, and specific approaches are required to improve their security.[84] Unfortunately, this research was

84 Anonymous interviewee, Dhaka, October/November 2007.

unable to explore the security of female-headed households in any detail. However, given that they were seen by ordinary Bangladeshis as a very vulnerable group, it is clear that greater attention needs to be paid to their security in future, including greater research into the specific problems that they face.

This chapter looks at four categories of people who are vulnerable or experience insecurity in different ways. Firstly, it looks at gender dimensions of security, looking both at forms of crime that are strongly gender-based and also more broadly at how insecurity is perceived differently by men, women and girls. It then looks at geographical differences in perceptions and experiences of security (by division and by rural or urban location) and at the security of various geographically vulnerable groups, such as people living in border regions or on char land. Thirdly, it considers the security of religious and ethnic minorities, assessing whether minority groups are more insecure and the specific threats they face. It concludes with a brief discussion of the security of the poor.

5.1 Gender and security

It is evident that women and girls experience, and perceive, certain forms of insecurity differently from men and boys. They may also react to these insecurities in a different way. Yet, it is equally apparent that the vulnerability of women and children cannot be examined in isolation, as threats to security often affect whole families and society more generally. Therefore, rather than thinking of 'women's security', it is considered more appropriate to approach the topic in terms of the relationship between gender and security.

Table 20 presents the same information as Table 2 in Section 2.2, but data has been extrapolated, so as to group together perceptions by gender. Unsurprisingly enough, women are more likely to be concerned by forms of gender-based insecurity, such as dowry, sexual violence, domestic violence, and women and children trafficking. However, it also shows that women in general have more concerns about security: the only exceptions being disputes over properties, drug abuse, and land grabbing. On the other hand, it may also be seen that in the majority of cases, distinctions between perceptions of security differ more seriously by location (rural/urban) than they do by gender.

There are many crimes which affect women and children differently from men. This sub-section focuses on several forms of insecurity that are very strongly gender-related. This includes domestic violence, dowry-related crime, sexual harassment, rape, and human trafficking. Acid violence has also been seen as a strongly gender-related crime, but it appears that in recent years the profile of victims of acid violence has started to change, with a greater proportion of men also suffering.

Domestic violence is believed to be a frequent occurrence in Bangladesh, though it is difficult to gather precise information on how widespread it is because much domestic violence is either not reported or not even be recognised as such. A multi-country study published by the WHO in 2005 researched the prevalence of domestic violence against women in two sites in Bangladesh, one in a city and one in a 'provincial' (rural) location. It suggested high levels of domestic violence, with 62 percent of women in the provincial location and 53 percent in the city location reporting having experienced physical or sexual violence at least once. 22 percent of women in the provincial location and 21 percent in the city location said they had experienced moderate violence from an intimate partner, and a further 19 percent in both locations said they had experienced severe violence.

Perhaps the most concerning finding of all, however, was that very few people had done anything to try and escape this violence. 66 percent of respondents who had suffered intimate-partner violence had never told anyone (not even other family

members) about the violence they had suffered, and only 5-7 percent had actually sought help from anywhere. Of the ten countries studied, therefore, Bangladeshi women were the least likely to report domestic violence or seek help, demonstrating the strength of the taboo that surrounds the subject. Some key informants noted that this can also lead the family of an abused woman not to defend her against domestic violence because of the stigma involved.[85]

Table 20: Worries about specific crime, violence and unlawful acts
(% of respondents; multiple responses permitted)

Worries	Male		Female		Total
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	
Personal property crimes (theft, burglary, robbery, mugging)	72	89	75	89	77
Dowry	55	47	59	59	56
Dispute over properties	36	38	33	35	35
Drug abuse	23	52	23	46	29
Sexual violence (eve teasing/ harassment in public/work places)	16	27	21	30	21
Land grabbing and being landless	16	16	12	17	15
Physical violence by strangers	9	20	12	24	13
Domestic violence	10	8	14	9	11
Political violence	9	4	24	19	10
Police harassment/false arrest	9	7	20	12	10
Extortion	6	5	19	17	9
Murder	5	6	14	21	8
Violence using firearms	6	4	13	16	7
Acid violence	6	5	7	12	6
Women and children trafficking	5	5	4	9	6
Ethnic/religious violence	5	3	8	9	5
Slum eviction	2	4	8	7	4
Kidnapping and ransom	3	3	3	4	3

It is only recently that the scale of the problem of domestic violence has begun to be recognised in Bangladesh. The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs is co-ordinating the development of a new law on domestic violence in consultation with a wide range of NGOs and women's associations.[86] It is expected that a draft of this law will be ready in the first half of 2008. However, it is clear that the adoption of a new law will not by itself solve the problem of domestic violence without a much wider social shift in attitudes, so that victims feel more able to report such matters.

The most common – and most sensitive – form of domestic violence is that related to dowry. Table 2 in Section 2.2 shows that dowry-related matters were cited as the second highest concern in terms of crime and violence (after personal property crimes), with 56 percent of respondents viewing this as a frequent problem.

A dowry is 'property or money given by a bride's family to a groom's family or vice versa as part of a marriage contract'.[87] The tradition of paying a dowry is widespread in Bangladesh (as it is across much of South Asia), and is a great burden for many families. Exactly what constitutes a satisfactory dowry differs depending on the social standing and expectations of the families and communities involved, yet the scale of the dowry to be provided is often extremely demanding. Providing a dowry for a daughter's marriage thus puts a great financial and emotional burden on families.

Dowry-related violence occurs for two closely-related reasons. Firstly, a bride may be beaten if she is unable to provide a dowry or if the groom feels the dowry to be

85 Anonymous interviewees, Dhaka, October/November 2007.
86 Anonymous interviewees, Dhaka, October/November 2007.
87 Banglapedia online, 'Dowry'. <http://search.com.bd/banglapedia/HT/D_0273.htm>, accessed 9 April 2008.

insufficient. Sometimes it is not only the groom who engages in such violence, but the whole of the groom's family. Such occurrences are frequently published in the news.[88] Secondly, even if a dowry is paid and accepted at the time, the groom (and/or his family) may later decide that the dowry was not enough and demand further payment from the bride's family, again leading to violence if these demands are not satisfied. Thus, the idea of dowry often mutates from a one-off payment into an ongoing 'debt' which may sometimes be impossible for the bride's family to ever pay off in full. One focus group participant in Sylhet said that she had been beaten by her husband and his family because her mother had not been able to meet his demands for money, which had led her to leave and return to live with her mother.

Table 21 gives details of dowry-related violence reported by the media in late 2006 to the end of 2007. Despite the need to treat such figures with caution, it is clear that dowry-related deaths are frequent, and they are also a key cause of suicide. Extreme incidents include the practice of setting women on fire for non-payment of dowry.[89]

Table 21: Media reporting of dowry-related violence, 2007

Source	Physical Violence*	Torture*	Killed	Suicide	Acid	Divorce
Media survey (10/06–09/07)	–	15	135	33	21	13
Ain o Shalish Kendra (2007)	273	–	187	16	12	–

* When compiling these figures, slightly different terminology was used: the term 'physical violence' was used by ASK but not by the media survey, while 'torture' was used by the media survey but not by ASK.

It is believed that media reports reflect only a fraction of all dowry-related violence within Bangladesh. Most of the time, women suffering from dowry-related violence do so in silence, because of strong social taboos on challenging domestic violence.

Successive governments have made a commitment to end dowry-related violence, and in 1980 the Dowry Prevention Act was passed which prohibited dowry and made it an offence which could be punished with imprisonment; subsequent laws have strength-ened provisions to deal with dowry-related violence. Despite this, it is widely believed that there has been no reduction in the payment of dowries or dowry-related violence. Moreover, social attitudes towards dowry remain largely unchanged. It is sometimes argued that high levels of unemployment actually encourage the dowry system, which is seen as a way for young men and their families to earn money.[90] It is likely that dowry-related violence can be reduced only by addressing underlying social attitudes.

Another, more public challenge that women and particularly younger women and girls have to face is 'eve-teasing'. 'Eve-teasing' is a term used in Bangladesh to refer to a variety of activities that to a greater or lesser degree constitute sexual harassment. At one end of the scale, this can mean simple name-calling and making lewd comments, but it can also go beyond this to physical harassment, such as groping and at worst sexual violence. Sexual harassment was listed as a major concern in the household survey, with 21 percent of rural and 30 percent of urban women viewing it as a frequent problem. It should be noted here that it was also reported as a frequent problem by 16 percent of rural and 27 percent of urban men, showing that although it is targeted at girls and women, many men are also concerned. This research was unable to analyse different forms of sexual harassment more deeply, but it is clear that it is a major issue in Bangladesh, and it is an issue which is also regularly discussed in the media.[91] Police

88 See for example: 'Housewife beaten to death for dowry' in *The Daily Star* (Dhaka), 13 April 2006; 'Housewife stabbed to death over dowry' in *The Daily Star* (Dhaka), 13 March 2004.
89 See for example 'Man to die for killing wife for dowry' in *The Daily Star* (Dhaka), 30 October 2003.
90 Asian Legal Resource Centre, *Written statement on Dowry-related violence against women in Bangladesh*, distributed at 61st Session of the UN Commission on Human Rights, (ALRC, 2005); 'Eradicate poverty to check dowry' in The Daily Star (Dhaka), 9 January 2004.
91 See for example Rashid M, 'Letting eve-teasing go unpunished' in *The Daily Star* (Dhaka), 30 September 2007; Ali S, 'When will it be safe to walk on the streets' in *Star Weekend Magazine* (Dhaka), Volume 5 Issue 116, 13 October 2006.

statistics list 14,250 cases of 'cruelty to women' in 2007, down from a peak of 20,242 in 2003, yet it is unclear what crimes are included under this classification.[92]

The worst form of sexual harassment is rape: Table 22 provides a sample of the numbers of rape reported in the media. These figures must be treated with caution as it is not clear what proportion of rapes that are officially reported find their way into the media; moreover, as with other forms of sexual violence it is likely that many instances of rape go unreported, therefore, will not be represented in media reporting. This failure to report sexual violence is closely linked to victims' fears of becoming ostracised, as a consequence. Some key informants also opined that sexual violence, including rape, is under-reported because many women do not believe that the police will take their case seriously or treat them sensitively. This perception seems to be backed up by Ain o Shalish Kendra figures which suggest that less than half of reported rapes (298 of 634) lead to a case being filed.[93]

Table 22: Media reporting of rape, 2007

Months	Victims	Women*	Children*	Murdered after rape	Suicide after rape
Media survey (10/06–09/07)	641	415	226	128	14
Ain o Shalish Kendra (2007)	634	423	211	90	8

* Children are treated as up to 16 years of age in the media survey for this report, up to 18 years of age for the statistics from Ain o Shalish Kendra. The Ain o Shalish Kendra figures include statistics on rape victims whose age has not been mentioned. They are included here in the 'women' category.

Moreover, as argued by BRAC's 2007 'State of Governance' survey: 'fear of sexual violence, sexual harassment and loss of reputation result in extremely tight controls on women's behaviour, many of which are internalised by young women themselves'.[94] It also suggests that 'women, and in particular unmarried girls, are extremely sensitive to threats to their reputation and honour: the vital importance of women's reputation exacerbates the already very real threats of sexual harassment and sexual violence…it should be kept in mind that women's rights to familial and community protection in Bangladesh are closely premised on their reputation, which remains one of their primary assets'.[95] The implication is that not only do women suffer by actually becoming a victim of sexual harassment, but that they also suffer in more intangible ways from their fear – and their family's fear – of them becoming victims. This places all sorts of limits on the behaviour and choices of young women, some of which are consciously imposed and some which may simply be expected. The BRAC study argues that 'perhaps the most serious, widespread response to insecurities around women' is early marriage.[96] Thus, rather than prevent the insecurity caused by sexual harassment, which is often simply taken as a given, families will resort to life-changing measures to avoid this happening.

Another severe crime which is targeted against women and young girls is human trafficking. Some girls are taken from one part of the country to another (normally one of the major cities), but it is believed that most are trafficked into India and Pakistan, the Middle East or sometimes the West. As with other forms of crime, it is difficult to gain a clear picture on the scale of the problem. The media survey for this study recorded that 144 women and 123 children had been recovered from trafficking syndicates by the authorities between October 2006 and September 2007. It is likely, however, that this is a fraction of the total number of people who are trafficked each year.[97]

92 Bangladesh Police Crime Statistics, 2003-2007, available online at: <http://www.police.gov.bd/index5.php?category=48>, accessed 9 April 2008.
93 Ain o Shalish Kendra, Statistics of Human Rights Violations 2007 (in Bangla). <http://www.askbd.org/Statistics%20of%20HRVs.pdf>, accessed 9 April 2008.
94 BRAC University Centre for Governance Studies, *The State of Governance in Bangladesh 2007*, (BRAC, 2008, forthcoming).
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
97 The website of the Campaign Against Trafficking in Women collates together various statements and press reports regarding human trafficking. These are mostly from the 1990s, but give a good indication of the range of estimates and the confusion that this causes. <http://www.catwinternational.org/factbook/Bangladesh.php>, accessed 9 April 2008.

Focus group participants in Jessore reported that it is a particular concern in their area because of the proximity of the border with India and the city of Kolkata. Lawyers who attended this focus group said that it was very difficult to take any judicial action against traffickers because of a lack of investigative capacity among the police and the slow justice system, and the fact that it could be difficult to find people who were willing to testify.

The Government has several measures in place to try to address the problem of human trafficking. It has developed a National Anti-Trafficking Strategic Plan for Action, with support from the International Organisation from Migration, and has also launched a number of other projects to raise awareness of the threat of human trafficking and to train police services to combat trafficking more effectively. However, it has not yet signed the 'Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children' (known as the Palermo Protocol) or the broader UN Convention against Transnational Crime to which the protocol is attached.[98] Moreover, it is clear that as with other forms of gender-related crime and violence, successfully combating human trafficking will also require a broader change in social attitudes, both to ensure that more women are aware of the risks and also that victims of human trafficking do not face further discrimination after they return.

Additionally, as this report has already argued, insecurity is not only about how much crime people actually suffer, but also about how the fear of crime (or the belief that it will not be addressed) leads people to act in ways which limit their mobility and choices and thus do not undertake actions that might improve their long-term development and human security. One key indicator of this is how safe women feel about travelling around by day and by night. Figure 6 demonstrates that while the vast majority of people feel that it is safe for women to move about freely during the day, at night women are a lot more insecure. The diagram also shows that urban women are perceived to be at much greater risk than rural women.
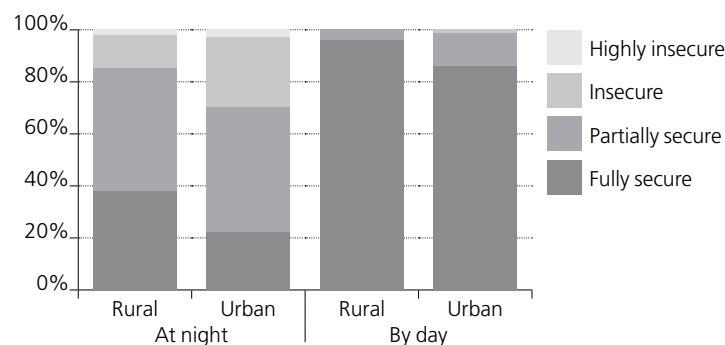
Figure 6: Views on women's local safety by rural-urban location

Overall, it is clear that gender-specific insecurity, in its different forms, poses a significant threat to 'freedom from fear' security. This is because it clearly compromises the physical (through acts of violence) and emotional (fear of being ostracised) well-being of women and girls, and potentially their families. Instances of domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking further limit human security by devaluing victims' capacity to enjoy basic human capabilities, such as dignity and self-esteem. It is also evident that 'freedom from want' security is equally vulnerable. The economic burden of dowry can, for example, result in extreme hardships for families if they are expected to pay a sum that is beyond their means. Economic insecurity is similarly linked to human trafficking, as poor women are often lured by promises of foreign employment, not realising until it is too late that they are likely to end up working in a brothel. Some women try to escape, but many stay because of the social shame involved in returning to one's community after such an experience. Also the physical implications of

98   United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Signatories of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*. <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CTOC/countrylist.html>, accessed 9 April 2008.

violence and sexual harassment are a threat to health security as victims may be severely harmed, either through bodily harm or sexually transmitted disease, as a result. Finally, limits to mobility may restrict women's or girls' access to basic services, thus affecting their development.

As previously argued, legislation and punishment alone cannot prevent gender-specific violence and insecurity; achieving a marked reduction in the levels of insecurity faced by women is likely to depend on a wider social change of attitudes with regards to violence against women, and to the place of women in society more generally. This report is not the place to consider overall gender relations in Bangladesh, but two broad observations can be made.

Firstly, there appears to be a great difference between how different forms of violence against women are perceived within society. On the one hand, 'public' forms of violence, such as sexual harassment ('eve teasing') and anything that damages a woman's reputation (including becoming the victim of rape or human trafficking) is widely feared and great measures are taken to avoid such incidents. On the other hand, 'private' forms of violence occurring within the household (dowry-related and other domestic violence) are seen as taboo even to discuss. Indeed, many people may not even perceive certain forms of domestic violence as automatically being wrong. The aforementioned WHO survey found that nearly 40 percent of Bangladeshi women interviewed in the 'provincial' location believed wife-beating to be justified if the woman had disobeyed her husband, and nearly 80 percent thought that it was justified if she had been unfaithful. Furthermore, less than half of respondents thought that women had the right to refuse sexual intercourse with their husband on the grounds that they did not want to. City-based respondents had stronger attitudes on what constituted physical or sexual violence, but even so, over half of women thought wife-beating was justified if a woman had been unfaithful.[99]

5.2 The security of geographically vulnerable groups and the landless

This sub-section looks first at general differences in security perceptions and threats between rural and urban areas. It then briefly considers various groups who are thought to be particularly vulnerable: urban slum dwellers and remote geographic areas, including char lands.

5.2.1 Rural and urban insecurity

In Section 5.1 on gender and security, it was noted that there are greater differences in concerns about crime and injustice by rural/urban location than there are by gender (Table 20). This distinction is reflective of the actual experiences of households that had been victims of crime and/or injustice in the two years prior to the conducting of field research for this survey. Urban households were more likely to be victims of one or more crimes: 42 percent of all urban households had been victims, as opposed to 36 percent of rural households (Table 23).

This distinction has important implications, particularly for policing and other security sector institutions, which are still largely centralised and Dhaka-based. There is a danger that such institutions, and the policies and practice to which they adhere, will not be suitably responsive to the differences between urban and rural forms of insecurity. In rural communities, 'crime' is only a small part of the overall human pattern of human insecurity, and urban concepts of crime reduction and policing are thus of limited use. Community security initiatives that link together and address various forms of insecurity are likely to be more effective, and can help to bridge the gap and strengthen co-ordination between policies and institutions designed to address

99 World Health Organisation, *WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women: summary report of initial results on prevalence, health outcomes and women's responses*, (WHO, 2005), p 6–11.

'freedom from want' (governmental and non-governmental development bodies) and those designed to address 'freedom from fear' (the 'security sector').

Table 23: Distribution of victimisation by location
(% of households experiencing at least one incident)

Household characteristics	Faced at least one event in previous two years		
	No.	Total households	(% of households)
Urban	185	443	42
Rural	566	1557	36

This differential along urban/rural lines is equally true of overall sources of insecurity (Table 24).

Table 24: Sources of insecurity by gender and location
(% of respondents; up to three responses allowed)

	Male		Female		Total
Source of insecurity cited	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	
Natural disaster	58	37	58	36	53
No health services	52	28	54	35	48
Increase in crime	24	41	24	38	28
Drug abuse	20	39	16	39	23
No police station in the area	18	12	15	14	16
Lack of job security	12	20	10	26	14
Seasonal/chronic food insecurity	16	5	16	6	14
Loss of land due to river erosion	15	3	13	5	12

From this disaggregation, it may be seen that rural respondents are predominantly concerned about matters surrounding 'freedom from want', including environmental security (for example, natural disasters, loss of land due to river erosion), food security, and health security. Their urban counterparts, while also demonstrating concern about these issues, are notably more worried with 'freedom from fear' issues; crime (particularly property theft), drug abuse, 'public' forms of violence (sexual harassment; physical violence by strangers; political violence; murder; and violence using firearms) and abuses of power (police harassment and extortion).[100]

5.2.2 Security of urban slum dwellers

Slum dwellers in Dhaka and other towns and cities have specific experiences of insecurity. As some of the poorest members of society, they face a range of serious challenges relating to both 'freedom from want' and 'freedom from fear'.

A recent study of 'Dhaka's Urban Poor' for the World Bank details the many 'freedom from want' insecurities facing slum dwellers. According to this research, not only do slum dwellers face severe economic hardship, but 'access to basic services such as water, sanitation, electricity, health and education by the poor is limited'.[101] This lack of infrastructure and services gives many slum dwellers little hope of moving out of poverty. It also causes great health insecurity, especially as only seven percent of slums have a public health clinic. Vulnerability to environmental problems is also seen as a risk: 'an estimated 7,600 households live in slums that are within 50 meters of the river and are in frequent risk of being flooded'.[102]

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100 It should be underlined that over 75 percent of the respondents for the household survey were from rural locations. Therefore, while the overall results of the survey broadly reflect the views of the population as a whole, they are skewed towards rural perceptions of insecurity and crime.
101 World Bank Office Dhaka, *Dhaka: Improving Living Conditions for the Urban Poor*, Bangladesh Development Series Paper No. 17, (World Bank, 2007), p xvi
102 Ibid p xiv.

These insecurities are exacerbated by prominent concerns relating to 'freedom from fear', particularly crime and violence. The World Bank report carried out a victimisation survey in four Dhaka slums. This found that '93 percent [of respondents] said that they have been affected by crime and violence over the last 12 months'.[103] However, it is unclear exactly what is meant by 'affected', as it is not evident whether it refers to personal experiences. Moreover, perceptions of security differed greatly from slum to slum. In one slum, only 6 percent of people reported feeling not at all safe, whereas in the worst slum (Shahid Nagar), 64 percent of respondents said that they did not feel safe; overall, however, 69 percent of respondents felt fairly safe, safe or very safe.[104]

Nonetheless, it is clear that crime and insecurity is a major problem in the slums. Respondents were also asked to list the most frequent forms of crime and violence that occur in their location. The five most common answers were: clashes between *mastaan* groups; political violence; toll collection; possession and distribution of drugs and alcohol; and committing crime under the influence of intoxicants.[105] These appear to confirm the prevalence of *mastaani* within slums, and also once again show the level of concern surrounding drugs and alcohol abuse. Combined with the finding that the majority of respondents still feel secure, however, this might support the argument above that the *mastaani* play a complex role which does in some way maintain order, however brutal the fashion in which it is imposed. Lastly, it was also reported that 60 percent of crime and violence is not reported to anyone; only 3 percent is reported to the police and people are much more likely to report crime to community leaders (16 percent).[106]

A slightly older study by James Garrett and Akhter Ahmed provides further light on the crime and security situation in slum areas. It involved a household survey on crime and insecurity in 14 slums in the city of Dinajpur in 2002. This 'confirmed that crime is a highly complex, multifaceted and not uncommon phenomenon in the slums…[and]… revealed a wide range of types of crime, including kidnapping, rape, acid attacks, theft and robbery, drug-related violence, *mastaan*-induced violence and political violence'.[107] Within this, however, it found significant differences in the frequency of crime reported, with some slums reporting relatively low levels and one-third of all crimes concentrated in just two of the 14 sites studied. 45 percent of all reported crime was theft and a further 11 percent was muggings, while 25 percent was 'severe beatings'. This is in keeping with the overall research for this survey, which found personal property theft to be the most frequent crime affecting all Bangladeshis. However, the fact that 'severe beatings' was the second most frequent category suggests that such violence is perhaps more common in slums than in other environments. Another revealing finding was that 41 percent of people had not reported the crime to anyone (and only 8 percent to the police), and that no action had been taken in 76 percent of cases.[108]

These two studies once again emphasise that forms of crime and insecurity differ considerably depending on the location – and even from slum to slum. Efforts to combat crime in slum areas therefore need to be carefully designed to address the specific challenges faced by each slum. However, it is clear that over the short-term, the police (and the authorities more generally) have relatively little influence over criminality and injustice in slum areas. They are not trusted, and only a very small proportion of crimes are even officially reported. Improving security in slums is thus likely to depend considerably on non-formal mechanisms that strengthen the capacity of the community to address and prevent crime, and that any policing that does exist needs to be strongly community-based if it is to have any chance of success (see Section 6.2).

103 Ibid p 65.
104 Ibid p 134.
105 Ibid p 66.
106 Ibid p 70.
107 Garrett J and Ahmed A, 'Incorporating crime in household surveys: a research note' in *Environment and Urbanization 2004*, vol. 16, (Sage Publications, 2004), p 144.
108 Ibid p145–8.

5.2.3 Security in remote geographic areas

Despite Bangladesh's high population density, some areas of the country may be considered geographically 'remote' in that they lack basic infrastructure and access to services. This includes *char* land, which often lacks most or all basic facilities. *Char* land is 'a tract of land surrounded by the waters of an ocean, sea, lake, or stream; it usually means any accretion in a river course or estuary…A distinction should be made between island *chars*, which are surrounded by water year-round and attached *chars*, which are connected to the mainland under normal flow'.[109] Island *chars* tend to be particularly isolated and have few or no public services. This has led the Government of Bangladesh and the UK Department for International Development to develop a *Char* Livelihoods Programme to 'specifically target the two million poorest *char* dwellers, 80 percent of which are estimated to be ultra poor'.[110]

It may be expected that human security concerns in these and other areas are overwhelmingly about freedom from want, though no specific research is available on crime and injustice in these areas.

5.3 The security of ethnic and religious minorities

Three main sets of minority are identified here: religious minorities; ethnic minorities (who may also be linguistic minorities); and displaced peoples. There is some overlap between these categories. The Rakhines, for instance, are both an ethnic and religious minority (Buddhists). Other groups are a minority in one way but part of the majority population in others: the Hindu population, which is almost entirely ethnic Bengali, is the most obvious example here. 'Displaced peoples' refers here to groups who live on the territory of Bangladesh but are not Bangladeshi citizens, particularly the Biharis and the Rohingyas.

Several key informants suggested that minorities are more vulnerable to certain types of crime, such as land grabbing, extortion, and violent crime, though this was attributed less to specific prejudices that lead to crime than to the fact that minorities have less political power and are thus even less likely than the general public to get protection from the state. It was also suggested that it is easier to use minorities as an instrument in times of heated political confrontation, either by bullying them to either support or not support a party or candidate (including financial contributions) or to pick on them as a scapegoat to mobilise core voters.[111]

This research did not look in detail at the security of all minorities, which would require more specific analysis; a separate study by the BRAC Research and Evaluation Department aims to address this gap. Nonetheless, by combining figures from the household survey with information from key informant interviews and from other available information, this section does provide some indication of how various minorities perceive insecurity, and explores some of the specific problems which they face. It also underlines the need for greater research and understanding if better policies on the human security of minorities are to be developed.

5.3.1 Security of religious minorities

Bangladesh is a largely Muslim country. According to figures from the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information of Statistics, 89.7 percent of the population is Muslim, 9.2 percent are Hindu, 0.7 percent are Buddhist and 0.3 percent are Christian, with Animists and believers in tribal faiths making up 0.1 percent of the population.[112] Article 2A of the Constitution declares that 'the state religion of the Republic is Islam, but other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony in the Republic'.[113]

109 Banglapedia online, 'Char'. <http://banglapedia.search.com.bd/HT/C_0135.htm>, accessed 13 April 2008.
110 Hodson R, *The Chars Livelihood Programme: The Story and Strategy So Far*, (Chars Livelihood Programme, 2006).
111 Anonymous interviewees, Dhaka, October/November 2007.
112 Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics, *Bangladesh Country Profile*, <http://www.banbeis.gov.bd/bd_pro.htm>, accessed 10 April 2008.
113 The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, available online at <http://www.pmo.gov.bd/constitution/index.htm>, accessed 10 April 2008.

Tables 25 and 26 relate to the same questions as Tables 1 and 2 in Section 2.2, but here the results are given according to religious group. Given statistical limitation of this survey, all religious minorities have been grouped together in order to provide data that is more likely to have some relevance.[114] The sources of insecurity have also been listed in order of priority of concern to religious minorities.

Table 25: Main sources of insecurity by religion
(% of respondents; multiple responses allowed)

Source of insecurity cited	All respondents	Muslim	Religious minorities	Difference (+/- in %)
No health services	48	47	54	+7
Natural disaster	53	54	51	-3
Drug/liquor abuse	23	22	26	+4
Increase in crime	28	29	23	-6
No police station in the area	16	15	21	+6
Loss of land due to river erosion	12	11	17	+6
Lack of job security	14	13	16	+3

Table 26: Worries about criminal, violent and unlawful acts by religious group
(% of respondents)

Type of crime/act	All respondents	Muslim	Religious minorities	Difference (+/- in %)
Personal property crimes (theft, burglary, robbery, mugging)	77	77	79	+2
Dowry	56	57	50	-7
Dispute over properties	35	34	38	+4
Drug abuse	29	27	36	+7
Sexual violence (eve teasing/ harassment in public/work places)	21	20	24	+4
Physical violence by strangers	13	11	23	+12
Land grabbing and being landless	15	14	21	+7
Ethnic/religious violence	5	3	20	+17
Murder	8	7	14	+7
Extortion	9	8	13	+5
Political violence	10	10	12	+2
Violence using firearms	7	6	12	+6
Political harassment/false arrest	10	10	10	0
Domestic violence	11	12	8	-4
Acid violence	6	6	5	-1
Slum eviction	4	4	5	+1
Women and children trafficking	6	6	4	-2
Kidnapping and ransom	3	3	4	+1

In terms of ranking different threats, it appears that religious minorities generally share the same views as the Muslim majority; however, it appears that religious minorities have identified more threats, more frequently than Muslims. This shows that religious minorities are more concerned than the majority Muslim population about almost all forms of insecurity.

Where general human security problems are concerned, religious minorities placed a higher priority on health services and drug abuse than Muslims, and less on natural disasters and crime. Dowry-related violence was not seen to be quite as high a concern, perhaps because cultural expectations surrounding dowries are slightly different for Hindus and they are not a traditional part of Buddhism or Christianity. Ethnic minorities also appear to be considerably more concerned about 'public' forms of

114 Of 2,000 respondents, 311 respondents identified themselves as religious minorities: 262 Hindus, 39 Buddhists and 10 Christians.

violence. Understandably, ethnic/religious violence was listed as a concern for 20 percent of respondents from religious minorities, compared to just 3 percent for the Muslim population. They were also much more concerned than Muslims about physical violence against strangers, murder and violence using firearms.

This fear of public forms of violence is most likely related to previous incidents of religiously-motivated violence, in particular violence against the Hindu population (which is by far the largest religious minority). In October 2001, following the general election, a wave of violence spread against Hindus. The election had been won by the BNP and *Jamaat-e-Islami*, and it was widely believed that attacks on Hindus were carried out by supporters of these parties in retribution against perceived Hindu support for the opposition AL.[115] This in turn caused many Hindus to leave the country, most of whom moved to India. However, no accurate statistics are available either on the number attacked or on the number of Hindus who left Bangladesh in the following weeks. This partly reflects the difficulties of gathering statistics on anything in Bangladesh; however, it was also alleged that the Government had made no attempt to monitor the violence properly and even that the Police had obstructed journalists from reporting it.[116] During the tenure of the previous government, external observers frequently claimed that there were growing attacks on minorities within the country, though the lack of statistics makes this assertion hard to prove.[117] Such incidents cause an underlying sense of uncertainty among Hindus which creates insecurity, in particular a fear of falling victim to ethnic violence. Christians and Buddhists make up a much smaller percentage of the population, and there does not appear to have been any widespread or co-ordinated attacks against such communities.

It is important not to exaggerate religiously-motivated violence, particularly that between Hindus and Muslims, as relations between these two groups are traditionally very good: based upon centuries of living together, good mutual understanding and a shared ethnic identity as Bengalis.

Aside from violence, other distinct factors have contributed to the insecurity of religious minorities. Firstly, from 1974 through to 2001, the Vested Property Act (the successor to the Enemy Property Act, a law adopted during the Pakistan period which allowed the Government to confiscate the property of individuals which it deemed to be 'enemies of the state') was seen by many as being a discriminatory tool, and thus a major cause of tenure insecurity. One study estimated that 925,050 Hindu households (40 percent of Hindu households in Bangladesh) had been affected by the Act, and that the Hindu community had lost about 53 percent of the total land it once owned.[118] One key informant claimed that even since the repeal of the Act, Hindus were still losing property to the state under different laws.[119] Christian and Buddhist key informants also reported that there was a perception of a 'glass ceiling' preventing these groups from reaching positions of authority within the country.

One last category of religious minority that should be mentioned are the Ahmadiyyahs. Ahmadiyyahs see themselves as Muslims, but are considered to be heretics by Sunnis and Shias because they follow Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and believe that he was a prophet. While this group is less economically disadvantaged than many other minorities, it remains vulnerable to attempts at land grabbing and expropriation of other resources and markets. They are also particularly at risk of crime and violence as a deliberate, violent campaign is being waged against them in some quarters which involves the use of arson and bombings against people and property.

115　Amnesty International, *Bangladesh: Attacks on Members of the Hindu Minority*, (Amnesty International, 2001).
116　Freedom House, 'Bangladesh' in *Freedom in the World 2002*, (Freedom House, 2002).
117　Government of the United States of America – Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 'Bangladesh' in *International Religious Freedom Report 2005*, (US Government, 2005); Human Rights Watch, 'Overview of human rights issues in Bangladesh' in *World Report 2006*, (Human Rights Watch, 2006); United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, *Bangladesh Policy Brief*, (USCIRF, 2006).
118　Barkat A, *Inquiry into Causes and Consequences of Deprivation of Hindu Minorities in Bangladesh through the Vested Property Act*, (PRIP Trust, 2000).
119　Anonymous interviewee, Dhaka, October/November 2007.

Although it is difficult to fully analyse the severity of human security concerns of religious minorities in comparison to the majority Muslim population, it is nevertheless clear that despite all religious groups sharing similar perceptions of insecurity, religious minorities are more susceptible to specific forms of insecurity, including: group motivated violence, exclusion from opportunities to fully participate in society, and discrimination in terms of access to justice.

5.3.2 Security of ethnic minorities

Bangladesh is approximately 98% ethnic Bengali. However, there are a number of other small ethnic communities in the country. There are at least 12 tribal ethnic groups in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the largest of which are the Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Tachangya, Khami and Mrung. There are also a number of other tribal groups elsewhere in Bangladesh, including the Santals in the north-west, Khasis in the Khasi Hills in Sylhet, and the Garos and Hajang in the north-east. There are also various other small ethnic minorities, including the Rakhines, originally from Arakan Province in Myanmar (Burma), who live in the Chittagong Division, particularly in and around Cox's Bazar, and in Patuakhali.

Tribal minorities are believed to be more vulnerable to tenure insecurity through land grabbing and other land disputes, because they often do not have any clear legal title over the land on which they have historically lived. Moreover, they have little political power and are thus even more vulnerable to arbitrary acts by corrupt officials.[120] However, there is little information to suggest any coordinated attacks against most ethnic minorities; the media survey recorded just one incident that was reported as 'ethnic violence', which was a clash between two tribes in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Yet even if there is no orchestrated violence against ethnic minorities, they continue to suffer from very low levels of human security. BRAC's 'State of Governance 2007' report argues that 'the extent of human insecurity among ethnic and religious minority groups in Bangladesh amounts to a crisis situation'.[121] It gives several reasons for this, including 'clear and common patterns of official indifference and collusion in how community leaders in connection with national political and state actors profit from and neglect the security needs of minority groups'.[122]

The BRAC study also underlines that although 'big' forms of insecurity such as crime, violence, and denial of justice are major problems for ethnic and religious minorities, more prosaic, 'day-to-day' forms of prejudice can actually have just as negative an impact on their human security: 'mundane forms of harassment and abuse by neighbours and local community members appear to play a highly significant role in creating uncertainty around economic activities, personal and asset safety, and in terms of investing in children's education'.[123]'

5.3.3 Security of displaced persons

There are two main groups of displaced persons in Bangladesh. The first are known as the Biharis. They are Urdu-speaking Muslims originally from the Indian state of Bihar. During the partition of India in 1947, they moved to East Bengal to be part of the new Pakistan. However, once Bangladesh became independent they became stateless. Bangladesh refused to recognise the Biharis because they were perceived to have sided with Pakistan rather than support independence, but Pakistan also refused to accept them as citizens. As a result, most Biharis have spent the last 35 years living in Bangladesh but without Bangladeshi citizenship, mostly in camps. It is estimated that there are about 250,000 Biharis living in camps across the country.[124] In 2003, a ruling from the Bangladesh High Court awarded 10 Biharis citizenship, which has led to hope that

120 Anonymous interviewees, Bangladesh, October/November 2007.
121 BRAC, *The State of Governance in Bangladesh* 2007.
122 Ibid.
123 Ibid.
124 Lynch M and Cook T, *Citizens of Nowhere: The Stateless Biharis of Bangladesh*, (Refugees International, 2006).

it will be possible to reach a solution for all Biharis in the near future.[125] It was not possible to specifically research the human security of the Biharis. However, given the difficult conditions in the camps, it may be presumed that most Biharis' human security concerns are predominantly related to everyday survival and 'freedom from want'.

The Rohingya are a predominantly Muslim ethnic group from Myanmar (Burma). There have been several influxes of Rohingya refugees fleeing persecution from the military government in Myanmar (Burma), the two biggest of which were in 1978 and 1991. In 1991, approximately 250,000 Rohingya arrived in Bangladesh as refugees. Many of those were later repatriated back to Myanmar (Burma), but a significant number remain. There are over 25,000 refugees in two official Rohingya refugee camps, who do not have freedom of movement, permission to work or access to education. There are also an estimated 100,000-200,000 Rohingya in Bangladesh who are not officially recognised as refugees and are living 'illegally' outside the camps.[126] Again, no specific research was done into the human security of the Rohingya, but it may be expected that their main concerns are also about basic 'freedom from want' issues. Key informants suggested that in the past, neither the Government nor the international community has done much to support the Rohingya.[127] However, recent documents from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) claim that there is now more willingness to address these matters and find a lasting solution.[128]

It is important however, not to marginalise the significance of 'freedom from fear' security. This is because displaced persons are equally vulnerable to wider issues of physical and emotional security.

5.4 The security of the poorest

As noted above, Bangladeshis themselves believe that the poorest families are also the most insecure. The household survey classified poverty according to food security, ranging from people who face a chronic deficit of food (poorest) through to those who have a food surplus (comparatively wealthier). Within this classification linkages to other elements of 'freedom from want' can be made, for example, food insecurity is often closely tied to economic capability. Moreover, chronic food deficit, is similarly likely to contribute to health insecurity (see Section 3).
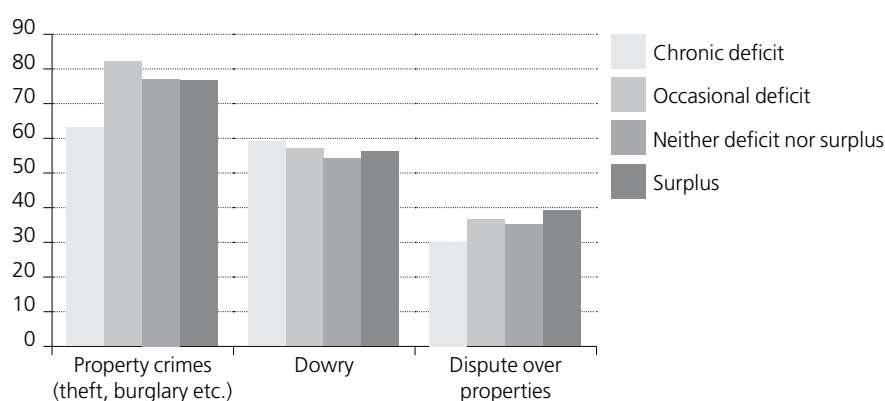
Figure 7: Perceived threats from criminal, violent and unlawful acts by socio-economic status

Of the most frequent concerns about crime and insecurity, the poorest were less concerned about personal property crimes and disputes over properties, perhaps because they perceive that they have less to lose. On the other hand, problems related to dow-

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125 UNHCR (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), *UNHCR Global Appeal 2008-2009 – Bangladesh*, (UNHCR, 2007).
126 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Bangladesh: Analysis of Gaps in the Protection of Rohingya Refugees*, (UNHCR, 2007).
127 Anonymous interviewees, Bangladesh, October/November 2007.
128 UNHCR, *Bangladesh: Analysis of Gaps*; UNHCR, *UNHCR Global Appeal 2008-2009 – Bangladesh*.

ries were seen to be a slightly higher concern; dowries place a huge burden on families from all socio-economic groups, but the burden of finding an adequate dowry may be particularly heavy for the poorest, as they are already likely to suffer from oppressive economic hardship.

Overall, this finding does not necessarily mean, however, that crime is less of a burden for the poorest. It is perhaps more likely that it is a matter of perspective – the impact of crime on their lives does not seem so great when compared to basic 'freedom from want' issues; in fact, pressing problems of daily survival may undermine any notion of 'freedom from fear' from even emerging.

 Moreover, it is argued in several places in Chapter 6 below that the poorest also suffer the most from corruption within the security and justice sector. This is because they are least able to afford the payments required in order to enter the official justice system or to ensure that their case is heard, and also because they lack any political power and are very vulnerable in any situation in which someone more powerful can manipulate the system in their favour. As a consequence, poverty as a manifestation of 'freedom from want' insecurity, impacts on potential 'freedom from fear' by devaluing access to justice. The impact of crime on poor households should also not be underestimated, as it is probable that the severity of 'freedom from want' issues distort tactical analysis of perceptions of insecurity. It is therefore, essential that more targeted research is undertaken to fully understand the human security implications of poverty in Bangladesh.

Section C

Maintaining human security

THE PREVIOUS SECTION analysed the main forms of insecurity in Bangladesh, and looked at how they affect different vulnerable groups. This analysis is useful, but it is only an abstract of the whole; it is equally important to study the response to these insecurities. This is a question of *governance*: how effective is the 'infrastructure' of the state, and of society more generally, in providing security? This has both 'preventive' and 'reactive' elements. 'Preventive' elements refer to the degree to which an environment exists in which citizens enjoy security and can avoid security threats arising. 'Reactive' elements, by contrast, refer to how effectively security threats that do occur are responded to.

Unfortunately, analysts considering the 'infrastructure' that provides human security often focus only on the state. While the state certainly has a fundamental role to play in providing human security (see Chapter 6), it is far from the only factor. A whole range of other actors also have considerable influence. In terms of economic security, for example, the strength and behaviour of private business clearly plays a major part; equally, 'traditional' crime prevention and justice mechanisms such as neighbourhood watches and *shalishi* may have just as much impact on crime levels as the police. There are also things that are not attributable to any specific actor, such as social and cultural attitudes, or levels of social and community cohesion. These are all considered in Chapter 7.

6

The state's role in maintaining human security

THIS CHAPTER LOOKS first at the state's 'reactive' role in maintaining human security (i.e. how well the state reacts to specific incidences of insecurity, such as a crime or a natural disaster) and then moves on to its 'preventive' role.

Of course, this distinction between 'reactive' and 'preventive' is more accessible for some forms and incidences of insecurity than others. For example, economic insecurities are not usually one-off events but the results of long-term processes, so the line between reactive and preventive responses blurs to the point of being meaningless (though there are exceptions when circumstances do change quickly, such as the sudden damage to people's economic situation by natural disasters or rapid price hikes). In general, the first three forms of human insecurity described (economic, food and health insecurities) fall within this field. They are not considered in detail in this chapter, but this is less because they do not fit easily into this framework than because there is already substantial literature on the role of the state in these fields. Environmental security is a little different, since it covers both long-term problems such as climate change and immediate problems which require a reaction, such as natural disasters. Inevitably, however, the main focus of this section will be on 'freedom from fear' issues, and particularly on crime and justice.

Before this, however, it is useful to begin by reviewing some results from the household survey which reveal how the public view the state's performance in providing security. These show which institutions the public believe to be playing the biggest role in providing security, and assess whether anything has changed in the last couple of years.

6.1 Public perceptions of the state's provision of security

The household survey asked respondents to name institutions that contribute to security, and also those that contribute to insecurity (Table 27). The results strongly demonstrate that the state is not the only actor that is involved in security. Indeed, relatively few people named state security institutions as primary security providers: only 28 percent stated that the presence of police stations contributed to their security, while Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) camps were listed by 4 percent and the Armed Forces

by 1 percent. However, these results also show yet again that Bangladeshis understand human security to be about much more than simply crime and justice matters, with the two biggest contributors to security being education institutions and NGOs/ micro-finance institutions, and health-care facilities also high on the list. It is also important to note that local government institutions (Union Parishads/municipalities) are also seen as factors of security.

It is very interesting that education institutions were the most frequently named institution contributing to security. The project partners who implemented the household survey, BRAC Research and Evaluation Division, suggested three possible reasons for this, based on supplementary discussions with respondents. Firstly, it may be that having a school or college nearby reassures parents that children will not have to travel far to gain an education, and there is thus less risk to their personal security. Secondly, schools and colleges are built to double as flood and disaster shelters; given the natural disasters that devastated much of Bangladesh in 2007, it is understandable that such shelters would be seen as a major source of security. Thirdly, it may be that it is the teachers in these institutions that are seen as a source of security, because the presence of educated people is an important source of advice and a way of gaining access to government services (indeed, five percent of respondents specifically identified teachers as an 'institution' contributing to security).

Table 27: Institutions that affect people's sense of security
(multiple responses allowed)

Institutions that contribute to security	%
Education institutions	43
NGO/micro-finance institution	34
Police stations	28
Union Parishad/Municipalities	28
Hospitals/Health care facilities	20
Teachers of educational institutions	5
BDR camps	4
Social/professional associations	2
Commercial banks	1
The Army	1
Don't know	4
No institution contributes to security	8

Institutions that contribute to insecurity	
There is no such institution	72
Don't know	17
Politicisation of Union Parishad	2
Other	1

Most people were unable to name any institution that contributed to insecurity. There are different possible interpretations for this. It may simply be that the idea that an institution could actually play a negative role was something that people had never considered, or they did not feel able to make such 'accusations'. Alternatively, it may suggest that most people think that the state security sector does not play a visible role, and is thus neither seen as a source of security nor of insecurity.

The household survey also asked people for their perceptions of how effective various institutions are now, compared to two years ago (Figure 8). It should be made clear that this is not necessarily an entirely accurate comparison, since perceptions of how effective institutions were two years ago may be obscured by memory or coloured by more recent experiences.
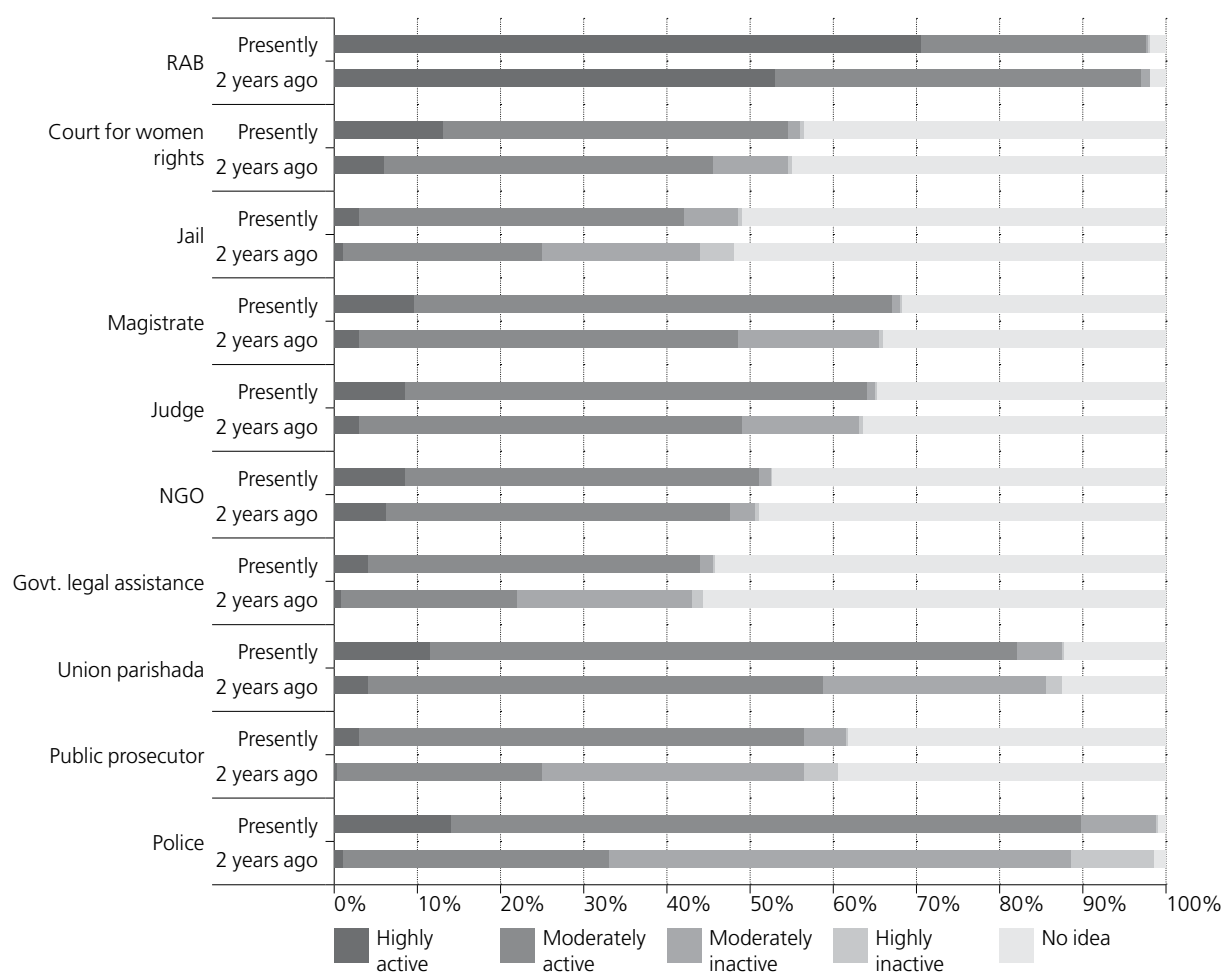
Figure 8: Effectiveness of different institutions: now and two years ago

Nonetheless, this data is still extremely useful in two key ways. Firstly, it shows that the public believes that all institutions have become more effective in recent months. This is no doubt closely related to the very high levels of support for the Caretaker Government found elsewhere in the survey and the belief that there had been a major increase in security since the Caretaker Government came to power (Table 8 in Section 4.1). The improvement should not be exaggerated, however; the majority of institutions are judged to be 'moderately active' but only the RAB is deemed by most people to be 'highly active'. Moreover, although this improvement is very welcome, it should not be assumed that this is a permanent change; there are various reasons to fear that the present improvement in security may be only temporary. In particular, it is unclear whether these institutions will continue to improve their effectiveness following the elections scheduled for the end of 2008, or whether political factors will act as an obstacle to further reform.

The second key benefit of this table is that it allows for a detailed comparison of which institutions are perceived to be the most effective. It is clear that the public has by far the highest levels of confidence in the RAB, which was judged to have been the most effective organisation two years ago and even more effective at the end of 2007. The second most effective institution is perceived to be the Police, and respondents suggest that there has been a major improvement over the last couple of years (the majority of respondents judged it to have been 'moderately inactive' two years previously). This shows that recent attempts from the Police to improve their behaviour and account-ability have been noticed by the public and are positively assessed.

Yet if nearly everyone has an opinion on the 'policing' part of the security sector, it is notable that the response 'don't know' was common for the justice sector: over 30 percent of respondents had no opinion about the effectiveness of judges, magistrates, and public prosecutors, rising to over 50 percent for government legal assistance. It is

unfair to read too much into these results, as it is not possible to say why people replied in this fashion. It might simply be that people had little to say about the justice sector because they had no direct experience of it themselves. This assumption however, has several distinct elements to it: people may have had little contact with the justice sector because they had not been victims of crime (suggesting that the justice system is not well understood in general); because they are more likely to rely on informal justice mechanisms (Chapter 7); or because they are unlikely to report a crime (see Section 4) and therefore do not take their complaint through the justice sector.

It should also be noted that there is high awareness of the role of the Union Parishad, with very few respondents replying 'don't know' to this question. Again, this shows the importance of local government in the maintenance of human security. As with other institutions, there is a perception that the Union Parishads have become more effective in the last two years, though the vast majority of people still judge them to be only 'moderately active'. The role of local government is discussed in Section 6.4.3 below.

6.2 Reacting to insecurities: 'Traditional' policing

This section looks at the effectiveness of the state in what might be called a 'traditional' policing role: i.e. how well it acts as a direct deterrent to crime (through patrolling), and how well it responds to specific incidences of crime. This is in distinction to modern theories of policing that also stress the importance of preventing crime by addressing the underlying causes of crime. It looks not only at the police, but also at other agencies that in some way perform a policing function, such as the RAB, Ansar (a voluntary organisation of 'village guards' – see 6.2.3) and the Armed Forces.

6.2.1 The Police

Until very recently, the Police were treated with caution by much of the public. It is still far from popular, but it appears that recent attempts at reform have started to alter perceptions. According to the household survey, the Police are the 'most improved institution': many people were of the opinion that the Police were not very effective two years ago but had since become relatively more active (Figure 8). A further indication that people's attitudes towards the Police are not as hostile as they may have been in the past is provided by Table 28, in which participants were asked about their respect for the Police. Although only 5 percent stated that they were 'very respectful of the Police', 80 percent of respondents were respectful or moderately respectful and only 15 percent said that they did not respect the Police.

These findings apparently show that the Police have become, if not popular, then at least less unpopular than in the past. Nonetheless, a variety of negative opinions were expressed regarding the Police, particularly within focus group discussions but also key informant interviews. Indeed, some government and police representatives also acknowledged that the Police have a negative image, yet they were also eager to explain what is being done to make the Police more effective. This sub-section looks first at some of the main criticisms that are made of the Police, and then the reforms that the Police are currently undergoing.

Table 28: Personal attitudes towards the Police as a law and order authority

Criticisms of the Police

The main criticisms of the Police heard in the focus group discussions and key informant interviews may be grouped together into several broad categories.

It was alleged by some focus group participants that the Police were not effective in preventing crime, and that if a crime was committed, there was little point in going to the Police as it was unlikely that this would actually lead to any positive outcome. This is demonstrated by the fact that only about one in 140 thefts are reported (Section 4.2.2). Indeed, for the 946 crimes in 751 households which respondents had experienced in the past two years (Table 7 in Section 4.1), just 137 had been reported to the Police. This means that only 18 percent of households reported a crime to the Police (corresponding to 14 percent of all crimes indicated). Although this would appear to contradict the previous assertion that the Police were considered to be greatly improved, and second only to the RAB in regard to effectiveness, the statement remains valid. This is because, the focus group discussions were held so as to provide a more thorough insight into the findings of the household survey, and therefore this criticism is likely to be representative of the approximate 10 percent of respondents that considered the Police to still be 'moderately inactive'. Also it does not correspond that all those that believed the Police to be 'moderately active' were happy with resulting law enforcement.

A perhaps more damaging finding is that most people would continue to avoid contacting the Police regardless of perceived improvements in their effectiveness; because of a belief that that it will only cause more trouble. Several reasons were given for this. The Police were seen to be insensitive to the needs of victims of crime and to treat them in a cold or aggressive way. There is a chance that they will be asked by the Police for payment just to investigate the incident. Some participants also alleged that the Police and criminals sometimes have a relationship, with the Police either taking bribes to not investigate crimes or even abetting the criminals in some way. Moreover, even if the Police did agree to take up the case, the investigation process would be long and complicated, as would the actual trial (see Section 6.3), meaning that there was little expectation of justice. For example, one focus group participant said that his wife had suffered an accident because of a CNG baby taxi, but he had not reported it to the Police because he thought the investigation process would drag on and even if justice was achieved, the taxi driver would receive minimum punishment. This indicates that despite the apparent success in changing general attitudes towards the Police, perceptions of institutional malpractice continue to devalue effective access to justice. Therefore, regardless of improvements in performance, victims of crime continue to feel that they as individuals will not receive the same treatment as others. Therefore, as the Police continue to improve, it is imperative that confidence building measures be adopted so that negative perceptions of law enforcement capacity among the general public can be reversed in the long-term.

The weakness of the Police was also indirectly acknowledged by the previous government when it established the RAB, since the implication was that the Police were not able to deal with crime effectively.[129] The RAB website itself states that 'one of the impediments to [Bangladesh's] development is its unstable law and order situation. At the back drop of this situation, Government of Bangladesh felt the necessity to organise a permanent special force under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Home Affairs in order to make the society crime free'.[130] The RAB is the latest in a series of measures to combat crime which go beyond the Police; Operation Clean Heart in 2002, which saw the deployment of huge numbers of Armed Forces personnel, was also based on the principle that the Police alone were not capable of maintaining law and order.

129 In a BBC interview, the Law Minister at the time, Moudud Ahmed, stated that: 'Our police is inadequate. They do not have sophisticated weapons nor do they have sufficient training. It is not possible to raise the whole police to a sufficient standard.' <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/4522734.stm>, accessed 13 April 2008.
130 'About RAB: Short History' on RAB website: <http://www.rab.gov.bd/about_hist.php>, accessed 13 April 2008.

The Police were also accused of both financial and political corruption. In terms of financial corruption, the main complaint was that it was very difficult to get the Police to investigate a crime without paying them first. A study of the links between human security and corruption by Transparency International Bangladesh based on a major household survey estimated that 'the average rate of unauthorised payment for registering a General Diary (complaint) with the police was Tk 939, that for First Information Reports Tk 2,430, and for police clearance certificates Tk 880 on an average. It was further estimated that the amount of bribe paid to the police by the households in a year was Tk 15,300 million' (this is discussed further in Section 6.4.2 below).[131] It was noted by key informants, including those within the Police, that previously 'brokers' operated between the public and the Police who would organise the necessary police documents or engagement in exchange for a fee, though the Police representatives claimed that this practice had now been stamped out, thus improving access to justice for all.[132]

The Police were also perceived to have previously been at the mercy of powerful political figures, undermining any notion of equal treatment under the law. Both focus group participants and key informants suggested that the Police had been (mis)used by whoever was in government in order to further their political goals and business interests and/or to control and coerce political opponents; rather than to investigate and prevent crime and maintain law and order. This manipulation of the Police could be achieved in several ways. Sometimes, it involved direct pressure on senior policemen (up to and including the Inspector General) to act in a certain way. However, it could also be done in more subtle ways. The government would seek to ensure that people loyal to the party in power would be appointed or promoted, particularly to senior positions. Sensitive investigations would also be handed to officers who could be trusted to come to the 'right' decision.[133]

Lastly, it was alleged that too many people appeared to be dying in shootings and in police custody, suggesting that training and human rights standards in the Police were not high enough. It should be noted that this was not a concern that was raised by focus group participants (it does not appear to be a matter that particularly worries the general public); it was instead raised by certain key informants. In this regard, concerns about deaths during crime-fighting operations generally apply slightly more to the RAB than to the Police, and are thus discussed in the sub-section on the RAB below. The media survey found that seven people were reported to have died in police custody between October 2006 and September 2007. These were linked to accusations that the police had treated arrestees with excessive force.

Recent improvements in the work of the Police

While the criticism within the focus groups was frequent enough to suggest that the Police are still far from totally trusted, they also said that the Police had improved in the past year; the household survey shows that people believe the Police to have become more active. Key informants (including senior police) gave two main reasons for this. One reason was that the Police were now able to operate without political interference under the Caretaker Government. Freed from this constraint, police officers were able to follow their conscience and behave in a more appropriate fashion. Interviewees argued that most police officers understood what was required of a 'good' police officer and wanted to live up to that ideal; this was especially true of the police management and those who had served as Civilian Police (CIVPOL) on UN peacekeeping missions, who had had greater exposure to international policing standards.

The other, related reason is that a real opportunity now exists for genuine police reform, towards which the first steps have already been taken.[134] The Government of Bangladesh has an agreement with the United Nations Development Programme

131 Iftekharuzzaman, *Corruption and Human Security in Bangladesh*, (Transparency International Bangladesh, 2006), p 18.
132 Anonymous interviewees, Dhaka, October/November 2007.
133 Anonymous interviewee, Dhaka, October/November 2007.
134 Anonymous interviewees, Bangladesh, October/November 2007.

to co-ordinate a large-scale, multi-year Police Reform Programme (PRP). This programme was developed and launched under the previous government, but has become much more active in the last year.[135] It is extremely ambitious and 'aims at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Bangladesh Police by supporting key areas of access to justice; including crime prevention, investigations, police operations and prosecutions; human resource management and training; and future directions, strategic capacity and oversight'.[136] This touches on nearly all aspects of the work of the Bangladesh Police, and includes significant financial support to improve physical resources, technical support to update the legal and policy framework, and training and other learning opportunities to improve policing skills.

The PRP also promotes the concept of 'community-based policing'. Community-based policing 'allows the police and community to work together in new ways to solve problems of crime, disorder and safety. It rests on two core elements: changing the methods and practice of the police and taking steps to establish a relationship between the police and the public'.[137] Eleven model *thanas* (police districts) have been set up across the country by the Bangladesh Police and the PRP in order to pilot the reforms and establish better police-community relations. So far, however, these pilot schemes are not widely known about. The household survey found that only 166 respondents (8 percent) had heard of community-based policing initiatives,[138] and of those, 42 percent did not think that the initiatives had yet had any success (Table 29), though this sample size is relatively small and it is not clear exactly whether respondents were basing their answers on any personal experience. By contrast, interviews with residents of a Dhaka slum area in which community-based policing is being piloted were much more positive: 'the police officers are like the imam in the mosque now. When we go to the police station they greet us with a salaam. This was never the case before'.[139]

Table 29: Perceived success of community policing
(% of respondents having heard of community policing)

	Very successful	Successful	Fairly successful	Not at all successful
Men	14	51	4	32
Women	11	32	0	57
All	13	43	2	42

The negative attitude of some to community-based policing in part may be because – as the description above suggests – success depends on the readiness of local communities to co-operate with the Police, and on the capacity of all parties to work together to reduce and prevent crime. Local communities thus need support in learning how to engage with the Police on crime and security: issues on which they have traditionally had little input. While improvements in police behaviour are likely to encourage such co-operation, local communities may well require extra support. However, it appears that there are few civil society organisations working on this issue (see Section 8.4). One notable exception is the Asia Foundation 'Community-Oriented Policing Programme', which has worked in a number of communities in Jessore, Bogra and Madaripur to develop Community-Police Forums that meet at least once a month to try and resolve a variety of local crime and insecurity matters.[140] This is carried out in co-operation with the Bangladesh Police. However, it is unclear what linkages the Bangladesh Police has made between the support provided by this project and other work on community-based policing provided by the PRP.

135 Anonymous interviewee, Bangladesh, October/November 2007.
136 'About us' on the Police Reform Programme website, <http://www.prp.org.bd/AboutUs.htm#rprp>, accessed 13 April 2008.
137 Groenewald H and Peake G, *Police Reform through Community-Based Policing: Philosophy and Guidelines for Implementation*, (International Police Academy, 2004), p 2.
138 Given the variety of ways in which 'community policing' is referred to and also the potential for confusion with neighbourhood watch schemes and other 'self-policing' initiatives, interviewers explained briefly to respondents what was meant by 'community policing'.
139 Anonymous interviewee, Dhaka, February 2008.
140 Asia Foundation, *Community Oriented Policing Factsheet*, <http://www.asiafoundation.org/pdf/BG_COP_8.5x11.pdf>, accessed 13 April 2008.

The success of police reform does not depend only on external support, however. The crucial factor is the drive for reform from within the Bangladesh Police itself. Key informant interviews revealed that senior police officers in the central Police and in Dhaka Metropolitan Police showed a strong desire for reform and were pushing through operational changes to ensure that the Police Service becomes more professional and capable. This includes a much greater resolve to punish illegal or inappropriate behaviour by police officers in order to remove the previous culture of impunity. Hundreds of police officers were sanctioned in 2007, with punishments ranging from small internal disciplinary measures through to dismissal and/or legal action against serious offences.[141] This will send a message both to the public and to the Police itself that no policeman is above the law.

Nonetheless, great challenges remain, and police reform will be a slow and gradual process. One of the foundation stones required for reform is an update of the legal framework. Currently, the Police are still governed by the 1861 Police Ordinance, a relic of colonial times which continues to influence the way that the Police is organised and operated. With the support of the PRP, a new Police Ordinance has been drafted, which will fundamentally alter the work of the Police. It is intended to give the Police more operational freedom to ensure that it can no longer be manipulated by the executive, and to improve its accountability. This includes the establishment of an independent National Police Commission and an independent Police Complaints Authority. There is hope that the updated Ordinance will be passed in 2008.

The Police will also continue to struggle with huge resource constraints. The national budget does not allow sufficient expense to be spent on policing. As a result, police are often forced to improvise, and this in itself is one driver of corruption. One police officer explained that he was expected to remain in contact with his superiors at all times by mobile phone, yet no resources were provided in order to pay for the phone bills. There was also a lack of stationery with which to write up official reports. Such resource constraints mean that police officers often turn to corruption in order to pay for their official responsibilities.[142] However, one senior police interviewee pointed out that although resource constraints are a major problem, they should not be used as an excuse and that reforms did not depend on money: 'The most important thing is mindset: Do you want to extort from people, or do you want to deliver a service?'[143]

As the survey data shows, this change in attitude and attempt to improve service is already starting to improve public opinions of the police. If this positive trend continues, it can be expected to be extremely beneficial for human security over the long term, as it will create an opportunity to strengthen police-community relations and allow police and communities to work together to address security concerns relating to 'freedom from fear' such as crime and violence.

6.2.2 **The RAB**   As noted above, the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) was established under the previous government in order to address mounting worries about crime and disorder. It brought together a number of existing 'Rapid Action Forces' into a single body. The RAB is seen as an elite force, and is charged with countering and investigating serious crime. It is much smaller than the Police Service, but it is much better equipped, and has better trained staff. It is made up of a mixture of Armed Forces and police personnel (about 60 percent from the Army, 20 to 30 percent from other armed forces, and 10 to 20 percent from the Police), who are normally posted to the RAB for two years.

Within months of its establishment, the RAB was a frequent source of controversy. Two main accusations were levelled. The first was that it was too ready to open fire and that too many people were dying in so-called 'crossfire' (see below), and for failing to

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141 Anonymous interviewees, Dhaka, October/November 2007.
142 Anonymous interviewee, Bangladesh, October/November 2007.
143 Anonymous interviewee, Dhaka, October/November 2007.

respect human rights.[144] This included a sharp statement from the European Parliament urging the Bangladeshi government 'to put an end to the activities of sectarian forces and to the so-called anti crime operations by the special forces RAB, which come down to extrajudicial killings (more than 40 "deaths in cross-fire" per month)'.[145] Secondly, the opposition Awami League alleged that the RAB was not acting fully under the law and that it was being run personally by senior government figures.[146] These allegations were consistently rebuffed both by the RAB and by the Government, which pointed to apparent success in curbing crime, and the widespread approval of the actions taken among the general population.[147] Yet support for the RAB was not universal, and concerns about its mode of operation were regularly expressed.[148]

Like other security sector institutions, the RAB is perceived to have become more effective under the Caretaker Government. The household survey demonstrates that the RAB is by far the most popular security sector institution in the country. As shown by Figure 8 in Section 6.1, over 95 percent of the population believe the RAB to be at least moderately active and over 70 percent say that it is very active. Two further results from the household survey show that the RAB has overwhelming public support. It is perceived as a good initiative by 97 percent of the population, and 96 percent of respondents believe it is responsible for an improvement in law and order (Tables 30 and 31).

Table 30: Attitudes towards RAB, by household and respondent characteristics

Characteristics of households/respondent		Perceive RAB as a good initiative (%)
Location	Rural	97
	Urban	98
Religion	Muslim	98
	Other religion	94
Respondents' sex	Male	98
	Female	96

Table 31: Perceived success in improving law and order by RAB in last 2 years

Assessment of RAB's performance	Percentage
Greatly improved	53
Improved moderately	43
Have not made any change	0.6
Law and order deteriorated moderately	0.4
Significant deterioration in law and order	0.2
Don't know	3

144 Human Rights Watch, *Judge, Jury and Executioner: Torture and Extrajudicial Killings by Bangladesh's Elite Security Force*, (Human Rights Watch, 2006).
145 European Parliament Resolution on Bangladesh B6-0265/2005, 11 April 2005.<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+MOTION+B6-2005-0265+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN>, accessed 15 April 2008.
146 'AL blasts govt for RAB actions' in *The Daily Star* (Dhaka), 11 August 2004; 'JS heats up on Rab, Bangla Bhai issues' in *The Daily Star* (Dhaka), 3 December 2004.
147 This research has not identified any specific opinion poll questions on public attitudes towards RAB, so it is hard to determine exactly how popular RAB was in 2004-2006. One indicator, however, is letters to the editor in newspaper archives (the easiest to access is *The Daily Star*). Not all letters about RAB are supportive, but there are several letters in support of RAB, for which relevant quotes are given: 'We are pretty happy with the activities of RAB' (3 December 2004); 'The RAB has already been a great success. The notorious criminals who thrived escaping the existing "rule of law" have finally begun disappearing due to RAB actions' (3 December 2004); 'Many people have supported while others have opposed RAB. But if we see, RAB is liked by the majority people... the reason behind this liking is the liquidation of criminals' (2 January 2005); 'Having lost my hubby on the 89th day of my marriage to the bullets of assassins in broad daylight, my salute to RAB's entire rank and file, especially Col. Bari for the firm stand he took on the issue of bringing back law and order' (12 May 2005).
148 Concerns were regularly heard about RAB's methods of working during the community consultations for NFASA, SAP-Bangladesh and Saferworld, Challenges to Peace and Security. The Daily Star letters page also provides some examples of such concerns: 'I will certainly like to ask all civilians who have supported the RAB through [*Daily Star*], does it mean that we have lost all our faith in the government, police and the rule of law in this country and opted for direct eradication of crime through brutal killings?' (26 December 2004); 'What is the central contention of the advocates of RAB It is that an underworld of crime cannot be contained by a corruptible judicial system and that extra-judicial killing of the assumed guilty, whether or not directly intended, can be justified both as a moral resolution and as an appendage to the judicial process. Yet...how does one propose to strengthen, as opposed to undermine, a judiciary by acting beyond the law on matters which fall properly within its jurisdiction?' (14 January 2005).

These figures suggest that public support for the RAB is undiminished by continued reports about the shooting of criminal suspects by law enforcement agencies. None-theless, it is important to recognise that killings continue to occur, and remain a cause of concern in terms of human security, because they raise concerns that human rights are not always fully respected during law enforcement operations. This is an extremely emotive issue. Human rights activists accuse the RAB and other law-enforcement agencies of 'extra-judicial killings', implying that people are being killed rather than facing a fair trial. The RAB counters that these are not deliberate killings, but are unfortunate 'encounter killings'. It emphasises that the term 'crossfire', which is how many of these killings are commonly labelled in the media, is not a legal term and is not used by the RAB itself. The use of the word 'crossfire' implies that innocent bystanders are inadvertently and avoidably killed, whereas 'encounter killings' are unfortunate deaths which have occurred when it has been necessary to open fire during dangerous arrests; it should not be forgotten that law enforcement officials are also attacked.[149] A magistrate investigates every incident and the RAB personnel are obliged to justify their actions.[150] Table 32 summarises the number of people killed in RAB 'crossfire' compared to other security agencies; Table 33 provides information on the number of law enforcement officers reported to be attacked while on duty (no deaths were recorded).

Table 32: Media reports of killings by security agencies, late 2006–early 2008

Source	Killed by RAB	Killed in RAB 'crossfire'	Killed by Police	Killed in Police 'crossfire'	Killed by other agencies*	Killed in 'crossfire' from other agencies
Media survey (10/06–09/07)	116	66	93	32	36	9
Ain o Shalish Kendra (2007)	14	78	34	31	7	–
Odhikar (12/01/07–11/02/08)†	95		64		25	

* Other agencies include the Armed Forces, BDR, the Coast Guard, Forest Guard, and 'Joint Forces'.
† Odhikar notes that the term 'crossfire' is used indiscriminately and it is thus not possible to distinguish 'crossfire' from other 'extra-judicial' killings.

Table 33: Reported attacks on law-enforcement officials, October 2006–November 2007

Month	Police	RAB	Armed Forces
October 2006	22	3	0
November 2006	25	2	0
December 2006	33	5	0
January 2007	5	1	0
February 2007	0	0	0
March 2007	0	0	0
April 2007	0	0	0
May 2007	0	0	0
June 2007	12	1	0
July 2007	10	2	0
August 2007	5	1	3
September 2007	2	0	0
Total	**114**	**15**	**3**

It is important that the findings of the media survey be treated with caution, while the number of 'crossfire' killings is likely to be quite indicative of the number of deaths

149 If RAB personnel only open fire when at high levels of risk, this may also indicate that there are a large number of illegal firearms in circulation to which criminals have ready access.
150 Anonymous interviewee, Dhaka, October/November 2007.

caused by law enforcement providers, because of the significance of the action; it is equally probable that not all attacks on officials are noted. This is because, instances occurring in remote areas, or that are not of public interest are likely not to be published.

Despite the RAB's ongoing and increasing popularity, some people have questioned whether the RAB is a long-term solution to Bangladesh's problems with crime and law and order. BHSA2005 is direct in saying that 'robust and authoritarian responses to security (like RAB or military interventions to resolve factional political conflicts) are not sustainable solutions…These institutional responses achieve immediate results but they do not address the critical drivers of insecurity…and are at risk of being absorbed into the clientelist political system and contributing to more serious insecurity over time'.[151] One key informant made a comparison between institutions such as the RAB and quinine as a precaution against malaria: 'it stops the fever but it doesn't deal with the mosquitoes'.[152] The implication is that without a long-term strategy to address the causes of insecurity, even 'tough' forms of policing cannot make a lasting impact on the overall crime situation in the country. In fact, some key informants who were law enforcement officials made a similar point themselves.[153]

6.2.3 Ansar/Village Defence Parties

Ansar is a voluntary organisation of 'village guards', and in terms of number of personnel it is by far the largest security institution in the country. It was established in 1948 in the early days of East Pakistan as an extra force to maintain internal law and order in the context of insecurity caused by the partition of India and the mass migration of peoples this caused.[154] The main tasks of Ansar personnel are to ensure the safety and security of Bangladesh by assisting in the maintenance of public order, and to participate in socio-economic programmes that benefit the country. It thus combines security and development roles. Socio-economic programmes are normally implemented in the form of training and education on topics such as sanitation, reproductive health, citizenship, etc. Ansar also plays a crucial role in coordinating and/or supporting disaster relief efforts at the local level, and was substantially involved in the relief operation following Cyclone Sidr in November 2007. Some Ansar personnel, known as 'embodied Ansar', are also deployed to protect key installations and infrastructure, for which they may receive some payment.

Ansar was expanded in 1976 with the establishment of Village Defence Parties (VDPs). Nearly every Union Parishad in the country has two VDP platoons: a male platoon of 32 people and a female platoon also of 32 people. This principle of equal membership of men and women is seen as a way of promoting gender equality across the country. In 1980, the VDP system was extended to urban areas with the establishment of Town Defence Parties.

1976 saw the establishment of Battalion Ansar; a better trained and better equipped regular force. Many Ansar battalions have been deployed alongside the Armed Forces in the Chittagong Hill Tracts to support the maintenance of peace and security in that area.

Ansar has an overall membership of approximately 4.7 million, including 4.67 million VDP members, 288,000 'normal' Ansar personnel, nearly 15,000 Batallion Ansar troops, and 2,640 officers and staff.[155]

Ansar plays a strange role within the security sector. In theory, it has great potential. It has a huge membership and is the only security institution in the country that can truly claim to have a proper 'grassroots' interface with the local population. As a

151 Op cit Khan MH.
152 Anonymous interviewee, Dhaka, October/November 2007.
153 Anonymous interviewees, Dhaka, October/November 2007.
154 Banglapedia online, 'Ansar and Village Defence Party'.<http://banglapedia.search.com.bd/HT/A_0256.htm>, accessed 15 April 2008.
155 Figures provided by Ansar, November 2007.

volunteer force, it also has motivated members who can be utilised in any number of positive ways. It might also be well-placed to play more of a role in 'preventive' policing because its members are representatives of the local community and understand the local security situation in a way that the understaffed Police are unable to do.

In practice, however, Ansar seems almost forgotten and its place within the overall security architecture of the country appears confused. It is notable that virtually no mention was made of Ansar in focus group discussions about security; nor was it mentioned in key informant interviews unless specifically raised by the researchers. Ansar receives relatively little funding from the state, which affects its ability to organise coherent training programmes. There is currently good co-ordination between Ansar and other security agencies, but much of this occurs on a personal and *ad hoc* basis and is not systematic.[156] As a consequence, much of its potential as a channel for socio-economic development initiatives and as a grassroots security institution goes unused. Key informants suggested that though Ansar's size and scale is one of its greatest strengths, it is also one of its greatest problems, for it is too large to manage, fund, or reform effectively.[157] It was also noted that relatively little information is available about Ansar and it has not been a topic of serious academic or policy research.

6.2.4 The Armed Forces

The Armed Forces are primarily concerned with national security rather than internal policing, but they also play certain roles in internal security. This is particularly the case in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, where it is the Armed Forces who are primarily responsible for maintaining peace and security. In the current state of emergency, the Armed Forces also share responsibility for the maintenance of stability. Moreover, in the run-up to the elections which are scheduled for the end of 2008, the military will be crucial for ensuring stability before, during, and after election day (Section 4.5.1).

Beyond this, however, the Armed Forces also have a number of other human security functions. The most high-profile of these is in times of disaster relief. In the aftermath of Cyclone Sidr in November 2007, the Armed Forces were deployed across the south of the country to contribute to – and in many places co-ordinate – the relief operation. They are also sometimes involved in 'economic relief' through the management of fair price markets and 'open market sales' of essential goods at controlled prices in order to maintain food security and prevent speculation and unnecessary price inflation during 'price hikes' (open market sales in early 2008 were mostly run by the BDR). Lastly, it was also noted that the Navy plays a role in policing Bangladesh's waters. Previously, the Navy had had sole responsibility for this, but in 1995 a separate Bangladesh Coast Guard was launched which answers to the Ministry of Home Affairs.[158] The Coast Guard is still relatively young and under-resourced, so it relies on support from the Navy (including many Navy officers on secondment), and many patrols are managed jointly.

6.2.5 Other agencies

There are a number of other agencies that are also involved in internal security. They will not be analysed in detail here, but their roles should not be forgotten or ignored.

The Department of Narcotics Control (DNC), which like the RAB and the Police is under the Ministry of Home Affairs, has responsibility for drug control policy (Section 4.3). The DNC has four functional wings: Administration, Training, Finance and Common Service; Operation, Traffic and Intelligence; Preventive Education, Research and Publication; and Treatment and Rehabilitation. 'Reactive' security and 'policing'

156 Anonymous interviewee, Dhaka, October/November 2007.
157 Anonymous interviewee, Dhaka, October/November 2007.
158 'History of Coast Guard' on Bangladesh Coast Guard website: <http://www.coastguard.gov.bd/history.html>, accessed 15 April 2008.

is primarily the responsibility of the DNC's Traffic and Intelligence Wing, which is responsible for: intelligence gathering, conducting raids; search, seizure, arrest; investigation of drug offences; prosecution of drug offences; inspection, supervision and monitoring of the operation of licenses.[159]

The Ministry of Home Affairs is also responsible for the BDR. The BDR are primarily responsible for border security and anti-smuggling activities. They can also be mobilised to support the Government or the Armed Forces in other activities if required. The BDR have been managing the open market sales of essential commodities in early 2008.

Counter-terrorism is also an extremely important part of policing and internal security (Section 4.5.3). Responsibility for counter-terrorism is shared among several agencies and overseen by the Ministry of Home Affairs. The lead agency is the Counter-Terrorism Bureau at the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), which carries out intelligence work along with National Security Intelligence (NSI). Operational work is the responsibility of the RAB and the Police. These agencies also co-operate actively with counter-terrorism agencies in other countries.

6.3 Reacting to insecurities: The justice sector

Human security is not only about avoiding specific insecurities. It is also about living in a society where you can be confident that the state will treat everybody fairly, respect human rights, and that injustices will be addressed. If 'policing' is about deterrence and immediate response to criminal incidents, then the 'justice' system is about achieving a just settlement in cases where crime and injustice do occur. This should bring resolution to the victims of crime and punish criminals in a way that deters others.

The 'quality' of justice in a country depends on many factors and any evaluation is to some extent subjective. From a governance perspective, however, two factors are crucial. The first concerns the 'rule of law'. Essentially, the rule of law may be said to exist when a society functions in accordance with national legislation, and when all citizens are treated equally before the law (i.e. nobody, even the most powerful, are 'above the law'). This can only occur when the judiciary is independent from the executive and the legislature; thus free from political interference that would undermine the principle of equal treatment before the law. The judiciary must also be strong enough to hold the executive and the legislature to account and ensure that the government acts in accordance with the law.

The rule of law is thus an essential part of good governance, and good governance promotes human security; people will feel safer, and will be better able to achieve economic and social development, where laws are fair and are implemented impartially and predictably. By contrast, where such governance breaks down and there is no respect for the rule of law, people are more likely to fall victim of crime, and they are also less likely to invest in long-term measures to boost their human security and development because they fear that arbitrary events could derail their plans at any time.

In nearly all of the last ten years, the World Bank has provided a ranking for rule of law in countries around the globe, as one of six key Worldwide Governance Indicators. A numerical indicator of between -2.5 (very bad governance) and +2.5 (very good governance) is produced by synthesising information from a range of analytical materials, and these indicators are compared across countries. This further allows for a relative 'percentile rank' to be given to each country, with 0 being the lowest ranking in the world and 100 being the highest. The Rule of Law Governance Indicators for Bangladesh since 1996 are listed in Table 34. This table shows that governance was perceived

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[159] 'About DNC' on the official website of the Department of Narcotics Control, <http://www.dnc.gov.bd/aboutdnc.html>, accessed 15 April 2008.

to have improved slightly in 2000-2002, deteriorating again in 2003-2004, and then improving slightly in 2005-2006. Generally, however, the quality of governance in Bangladesh has remained relatively poor.

Table 34: World Bank Rule of Law Governance Indicators for Bangladesh, 1996–2006[160]

Year	Governance Score	Percentile Rank	Number of sources
1996	-0.78	24.3	6
1998	-0.85	21.0	8
2000	-0.80	26.7	11
2002	-0.78	25.7	13
2003	-0.88	21.4	13
2004	-0.93	18.6	15
2005	-0.87	21.8	15
2006	-0.86	22.9	16

The second crucial factor may be termed 'access to justice'. This is closely related to the idea that everybody should be treated equally before the law, but emphasises that this equality is not only about the actual legal judgement, but also about whether everyone has the same opportunity to achieve justice. There may be many formal or informal barriers to entry and passage through the justice system which discourage sections of the population from ever getting to a legal decision.

This section looks at access to justice in terms of both entering the justice system (investigation and/or preparation of cases) and the passing of justice (court trials and other forms of judgement).

6.3.1 Entering the justice system

As noted above, the first challenge to entering the official justice system is corruption. For criminal cases, the Police would often not file a General Diary or a First Information Report without an initial payment.[161] Another challenge for criminal cases is that the quality of investigation is usually slow and often lacking in quality, with the police lacking the necessary manpower, resources or training to undertake most criminal investigation effectively. Interviews with police officers for the 2002 UNDP report on human security in Bangladesh listed a number of problems relating to investigations, including: lack of accountability of investigation officers to the people; lack of required number of investigation officers; neutrality not maintained during investigation; and corruption practices during investigation.[162]

Similar barriers exist for civil cases, particularly in the lower judiciary, which deals with the majority of cases. A household survey of corruption by Transparency International Bangladesh in 2005 found that 66 percent of respondents who had been to court had needed to pay bribes, at an average rate of Tk 6,135. People who had been accused of a crime also made unauthorised payments to try to have the case dropped: 65 percent of those accused had made such payments, at an average rate of Tk 7,728. 43 percent of those who made such an unauthorised payment earned less than one dollar a day.[163]

Even where there is no corruption, much of the population cannot afford a lawyer and so adequate legal counsel is not available for them. In recent years, there has been an expansion of legal aid in order to improve access to justice for the poorest, much of which has been sponsored by international donors. One of the most well-known providers of legal aid to the poor is the Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST),

160 'Governance Matters 2007: Worldwide Governance Indicators 1996-2006' on World Bank website: <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi2007/sc_country.asp>, accessed 15 April 2008.
161 Op cit Iftekharuzzaman.
162 UNDP, *Human Security in Bangladesh*, p 72.
163 Op cit Iftekharuzzaman.

which provides legal aid to those that earn less than Tk 3,000 (approximately $44) a month. Between August 1994 and September 2007, BLAST filed 44,071 cases, of which 28,090 (64 percent) have been settled. Of those that have been settled, 19,494 (69 percent) were settled in favour of BLAST's clients.[164] This and other initiatives have also helped to raise awareness of the idea of legal aid and the rights of the poor to seek justice. However, there is no formal obligation to provide legal aid and the costs involved in litigation remain a very serous barrier to justice for much of the population.

In spite of this aid, access to justice may continue to prove to be beyond the reach of the most vulnerable, as in some respects the present legal system strains the 'freedom from want' security of many of those that attend court; because they are not able to work while they are doing so. Therefore, those victims that live with economic insecurity may be discouraged from taking legal action because they are concerned that they will not be able to afford to live without the income that would be lost.[165] While there is no proper system of compensation for people involved in court procedures, access to justice will continue to marginalise the most vulnerable.

The other main obstacle to entering the official justice system is the sheer backlog of cases that has already built up. According to a previous Minister of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Moudud Ahmed, in 2005 there were 'about one million cases pending for resolution. Of these, about 550,000 [were] criminal and 450,000 [were] civil cases.'[166] Meanwhile, the courts had managed to dispose of just 500 cases in 18 months. Furthermore, the chances of reducing this backlog are next to nothing due to a lack of judges: 'there are 77 Supreme Court members and 750 other judges to dispense justice to a population of nearly 150 million people'.[167] One of the most frequently heard comments in both focus group discussions and key informant interviews was that 'justice delayed is justice denied'.

The previous government began to address this backlog through two main methods. The first was the introduction of the Law and Order Disturbance Crime (Speedy Trial) Act in 2002. This allowed 'speedy' trials to take place for the serious offences of murder, rape, possession of illegal arms or explosives and cases relating to narcotics and drugs. The law states that a special court (a 'speedy trial tribunal') must deal with each case within 90 days, although a 30-day extension can be granted if there are unavoidable delays. There are then 30 days to lodge an appeal in the High Court.

The Speedy Trial Act was perceived to be controversial and was denounced by the opposition Awami League as being open to political manipulation, particularly as it is the Government (rather than judges) that decides which cases are transferred to the courts. Transparency International Bangladesh found that there was some truth to these allegations: 'A diagnostic study on the implications of Speedy Trial Tribunal Act 2002 found that one fourth of the cases (25.3) lodged under this law were politically motivated, and political intervention takes place in more than one third of cases filed under this law'.[168] Under the Caretaker Government, the Speedy Trial Act was approved by the Council of Advisers[169] and continues to be used to try serious crimes.

The second step to reduce the backlog of cases was the promotion of mediation and alternative dispute resolution (ADR), through the adoption of the Civil Procedure (Amendment) Act 2003 into the Civil Procedure Code of 1908. One key informant noted that while mediation is very frequently used in other countries to resolve cases before they come to court, in Bangladesh there has been little incentive for lawyers to reach an out-of-court settlement rather than profit from the drawn-out legal

164 'Legal Aid' on the website of Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust: <http://www.blast.org.bd/legalaid.html>, accessed 16 April 2008.
165 Anonymous interviewee, Dhaka, October/November 2007.
166 Ahmed M, 'Challenges in Implementing Access to Justice Reforms in Bangladesh' in Asian Development Bank, *Challenges in Implementing Access to Justice Reforms*, (ADB, 2005), p.65.
167 Laskar SI, 'Bangladesh: Justice in disarray' in Transparency International, *Global Corruption Report 2007: Corruption and Judicial Systems*, (Transparency International, 2007), p.181.
168 Op cit Iftekharuzzaman, p 20.
169 'Advisers okay amendment to emergency power rules' in *The Daily Star* (Dhaka), 8 April 2007.

process.[170] Nonetheless, over time ADR has the potential to make a significant reduction in the number of cases which the courts are expected to try. International donors have also sponsored a number of projects aimed at developing and expanding ADR mechanisms.

Despite these innovations, the cost of entering the official courts (both genuine fees and corruption) and the likelihood that justice will take many years to achieve (if it is achieved at all), make the official legal system an unattractive option for many people for many forms of crime and civil dispute. This encourages many people to turn to non-formal justice mechanisms in order to resolve their problems (Chapter 7).

6.3.2 **Achieving justice: The courts**

The main obstacle that was noted to achieving justice through the official courts has been corruption. As was noted in the section on the Police above (Section 6.2.1), corruption can either be motivated by pure financial motives, or it can be 'political' corruption in which legal decisions are influenced by political factors, in particular undue political control or influence over the judicial process.

The aforementioned study on corruption and human security by Transparency International Bangladesh found that unauthorised payments were not only required to enter the justice system, but were also used in order to try and influence the outcomes of the judicial process: 'allegations were reported of enforcing unauthorized payments, especially from the defenders (67.6), while one-third of the complainants were also victims of corruption (especially if the complaint came from outside the Government). Magistrates, lawyers and bench officers are the key persons collecting bribes promising bails and/or favourable verdicts'.[171]

Political interference in the dispensation of justice is a problem that dates back to colonial times. Executive and judicial roles were often combined in the same person. In particular, 'the chief executive officer at the district level, the District Collector, was also made responsible for judicial functions as the District Magistrate…this arrangement was embedded in the Criminal Procedure Code of 1898 ("CrPC")'.[172] This system was carried over into East Pakistan, and then into independence. Various constitutional changes were made, but there continued to be significant executive control over judicial functions, especially in the lower judiciary. The Bangladesh Civil Service had various powers in terms of the appointment, promotion, transfer and disciplining of judges and magistrates which in practice gave the government significant levers to exercise influence. The capacity of political and administrative cadres to interfere in the justice system in this way severely undermined the independence of the judiciary and weakened the rule of law.

On a number of occasions, governments and/or the main political parties committed themselves to achieving the 'separation of the judiciary' (i.e. from the executive), but little concrete was ever done. In 1999, however, the pressure for this separation of the judiciary intensified following the Masdar Hossein Judgement. Masdar Hossein was one of over 200 people in judicial service who had brought a case arguing that the lower judiciary should be free from executive interference and should not be treated under the Bangladesh Civil Service rules. The High Court agreed, and after a challenge by the Government, so did the Appellate Division. The judgement included 12 directions for the Government to implement, including the establishment of a separate Judicial Service Commission and amendments to the Criminal Code that clarified that criminal cases could only be tried by judicial magistrates (i.e. removing the judicial functions of executive officers).

170 Anonymous interviewee, Dhaka, October/November 2007.
171 Op cit Iftekharuzzaman, p 20.
172 Hossain S and Alam T, *UNDP Policy Paper: Separation of the Judiciary from the Executive in Bangladesh*, (UNDP, 2006), p 15.

Despite this judgement, for many years little was done to implement the recommended changes. Only in 2007 were the measures required for the separation of the judiciary pushed through by the Caretaker Government, and on 1 November 2007 magistrates courts were officially handed over to Supreme Court control and new judicial magistrates took charge.[173]

The formal separation of the judiciary is a major step forward and is expected to have important benefits over the longer term. Nevertheless, several key informants emphasised that while it was a very welcome change, it would not by itself resolve the enormous problems facing the judiciary. Although the backlog might start to reduce now that judicial magistrates were being appointed and the constitutional deadlock had been broken, the scale of the problem is enormous and the judiciary remains extremely under-staffed and under-funded. The Supreme Court will need enormous support in terms of physical resources, training, and expertise in order to turn the dream of a strong independent judiciary into a reality. If it is to clear the backlog and ensure better dispensation of justice in future, it will also have to allocate resources to a major review of the way in which the whole justice system is managed.[174]

This is also likely to require greater international support for justice reform. There have been a number of internationally-funded projects on judicial reform, the largest of which is a $43.6 million Legal and Judicial Capacity Building Project sponsored by the World Bank, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), with contributions from the Government of Bangladesh as well. The project began in 2001 and is due to run until December 2008. Unfortunately, however, relatively little public information appears to be available on the implementation of this project.[175]

On the whole, however, it appears that legal reform and access to justice have not been priorities for donor agencies. This may be due to a perception that it is hard to make progress without the full commitment of previous governments in this sphere, with non-formal justice mechanisms seen as a more effective option where better results are achievable (see Chapter 7). However, the failings of the formal justice system continue to undermine human security in terms of both development/'freedom from want' and personal security/'freedom from fear'. This applies in everything from business disputes to tenure insecurity and to an unwillingness to even report crime to the authorities.

6.4 Preventing insecurity: Making and implementing policy

It is a cliché – but no less true for that – that prevention is better than cure. How quickly the state can react to specific incidences of insecurity is only part of the human security equation. The real strength of a state is how well it can prevent insecurities from happening in the first place. This depends on many factors (overall power, legitimacy, available resources, etc.), but one of the most important is *policy*, i.e. how well the state can design and implement policies which are not merely reactive, but aim to address the causes of insecurity and thus prevent such insecurity from occurring at all.

Policy-making is thus another key part of the governance agenda. There are various studies of governance that have looked at the quality of overall policy-making in Bangladesh.[176] This section does not try to replicate or add anything new to this literature; rather, it looks at the same issue of policy-making from a human security perspective. Of course, there is no overarching 'human security' policy or strategy, nor is there any

173 Manik JA, 'Judiciary freed from the executive fetters today' in *The Daily Star* (Dhaka), 1 November 2007.
174 Anonymous interviewees, Dhaka, October/November 2007.
175 The Ministry of Law and Justice <http://www.minlaw.gov.bd/ljcbp.htm> and the World Bank <http://web.worldbank.org/external/projects/main?menuPK=228424&theSitePK=40941&pagePK=64283627&piPK=73230&Projectid=P044810> websites do not have up-to-date documentation on the project and there are no reviews of project implementation or effectiveness. A request from the research team to meet with the World Bank was not successful.
176 Asian Development Bank, *Bangladesh Country Governance Assessment (Draft 2003)*, (ADB, 2003); BRAC, *The State of Governance in Bangladesh 2006*; Governance Matters 2007: Worldwide Governance Indicators 1996-2006' on World Bank website.

reason why there should be – and any such strategy would most likely be unwieldy and unworkable. However, it is still possible to consider how effective state policies are in promoting human security and whether difficulties in the policy-making process are hindering human security.

This report cannot look at all forms of human insecurity and how policy is developed in each and every sphere. As in other sections of this report, most analysis has been done of policy in 'freedom from fear' categories relating to crime and injustice. This section looks at four relevant aspects of making and implementing policy: the national-level policy process; the challenges of corruption and accountability; local government; and foreign policy. Before looking at these areas in more detail, however, a few very general observations can be made about how policy in the four categories of 'freedom from want' contributes towards human security.

In terms of food and health security, it is fair to assume that the majority of policies and projects are designed to strengthen human security, even if they are not put in these terms. The same is probably true of the majority of economic policies, though this may not always be the case. There are examples of projects with economic aims that have ignored the impact on human security of those affected. The most obvious of these is the building of the Kaptai reservoir in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, but there are others such as developments that require slum eviction without providing satisfactory compensation or alternative livelihoods, or the conversion of lands to shrimp cultivation without due thought about the implications for environmental and tenure security. More generally, there appears to be a perception still that 'security' is not a major issue and not one that economic development actors need to consider.

Where environmental security is concerned, recent experiences from Cyclone Sidr have demonstrated both some good and some bad sides of policy and planning. In many ways, the disaster relief operation was well prepared, which made the actual operation run smoothly, considering the terrible circumstances. Yet there were failings at the policy level, most notably the fact that shelters had not been maintained and new shelters had not been built. In short, it may be argued that there is a good degree of planning for relief operations, but less coherent policies on how to avoid and limit the effects of natural disasters and other environmental problems in the first place.

One other general point that should be made is that given the huge scope of many human security problems (and their causes), policies to strengthen human security need to take a similarly broad approach, and this will usually require co-ordination between many agencies. At the widest level, for example, a key informant from the Ministry of Education declared that his ministry is probably the most important ministry for human security, both because education will help development and because it can create more responsible citizens with a strong sense of responsibility and justice. Similarly, a key informant from the Ministry of Finance acknowledged that every decision that the ministry makes about the allocation of resources has an impact on human security in some way.[177]

6.4.1 **The national-level policy process**

The quality of policy-making clearly has a large impact on human security; the better designed and implemented policies are, the more likely they are to address human security problems effectively. Key informants noted a range of problems affecting the policy process, further limiting the capacity of the state to provide human security. These included:

■ **Reactive policy-making**. Policy-making (including that relating to human security) is largely reactive in nature, dealing with big events as they happen (whether they are natural disasters or serious crime), rather than thinking ahead.[178]

177 Anonymous interviewees, Dhaka, October/November 2007.
178 Anonymous interviewee, Dhaka, October/November 2007.

■ **Policy subverted by short-term political goals**. Many policy decisions are made according to the logic of factional political confrontation; an Asian Development Bank (ADB) assessment of governance concludes that 'development programs are in many instances undertaken and executed to serve the narrow party interest of the political party in power at the expense of the national interest'.[179]

■ **Poor information base**. In many fields, statistical information is absent or unreliable, meaning decision-making is more likely to be based on personal perceptions and on anecdotal evidence such as media surveys.

■ **Poor policy analysis**. Most government departments do not have much capacity to do internal policy research and analysis, for example, a research wing.

■ **Lack of consultation mechanisms**. Consultation mechanisms would provide greater information on which to base initial policy development, and could be used to 'test' a policy's acceptability to different affected groups. The ADB governance report states that 'beyond channels for official input, there are even fewer opportunities for ordinary citizens, special interests groups, or others who will be affected by new or revised policy to register their views and interests', but it notes that civil society and the media go some way to filling this gap.[180]

■ **Lack of resources for implementation**. Ministries tend to be under-resourced and have limited power to implement their responsibilities.

■ **Authority concentrated in too few hands**. Information and authority is not well enough dispersed either within ministries or between them. Within ministries, 'top-heavy management practices…concentrate decision-making authority among senior officials and deprive mid-level officials of the information required to perform their functions'.[181] Between ministries, 'policy implementation is further constrained by the lack of information exchange and coordination among a number of ministries or government agencies for which a particular policy has implications'.[182]

■ **Policies change too quickly with changes of government**. Many policies are dismantled or reoriented with every change of government, meaning that reforms that require long-term stability to be effective never take root. These changes create major uncertainty among the civil service, business and the general public.

Key informants gave some powerful examples of how these policy failures undermined human security. With regard to environmental security, for example, it was noted that although emergency relief in the aftermath of Cyclone Sidr was largely well-organised, very little had been done to prepare at-risk communities to handle such events. The disconnect between policy and implementation was highlighted by one key informant who argued that although the Government's PRSP[183] appeared to be quite holistic and forward-thinking, it was prepared primarily to impress donors and had little chance of being implemented properly.[184]

In terms of 'freedom from fear' insecurities, the poor quality of information is a major problem. As noted above, crime statistics are not well maintained, and given that most crime goes unreported do not provide a suitable base for policy making. Both quantitative and qualitative data is lacking. For example, neither the Police[185] nor the Ministry of Law and Justice[186] have the capacity to identify emerging policy issues, analyse trends or prepare policy options.

179 Asian Development Bank, Bangladesh Country Governance Assessment (Draft 2003), paragraph 108.
180 Ibid, paragraph 96.
181 Ibid paragraph 105.
182 Ibid paragraph 106.
183 Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, *Unlocking the Potential*, 2005.
184 Anonymous interviewee, Dhaka, October/November 2007.
185 The chapter on the Police in UNDP, *Human Security in Bangladesh proposes the establishment of a strategic planning cell* (p 66).
186 Anonymous interviewee, Dhaka, October/November 2007.

Another challenge, as already argued, is that crime and justice policy is overwhelmingly reactive, with little thought given to how to address the long-term drivers of insecurity and prevent crime. While political parties may have promised judicial or police reform at various points, there has to date been no overarching strategy for reform in either sector. Instead, initiatives such as the establishment of the RAB have been made on an ad hoc basis, seeking short-term solutions to the prevalence of organised and serious crime without addressing the underlying factors that perpetuate these crimes.

Another challenge for security and justice reform has been the lack of a clear vision of how the security and justice sector fits together as a whole, and how different agencies interact with each other. For example, since its establishment, the RAB has taken a leading role within the security sector, yet it is not entirely clear where its responsibilities end and those of the regular Police begin. The creation of the RAB was justified partly because of the failings of the Police (Section 6.2.1); if the Police Reform Programme is successful over time in improving the performance of the Police, will this reduce the need for the RAB or change the division of responsibilities between them? The PRSP also notes that the 'coordination of the police force with other law-enforcing agencies, such as BDR, Ansar and VDP, Coastguard, etc. is rather tenuous'.[187]

Nonetheless, key informants from all of the main security sector agencies reported that whilst in the past there had been problems with inter-agency co-ordination, things had improved under the Caretaker Government and the level of co-ordination was now much better. Some key informants argued that co-ordination mechanisms had always been in place, but previously had not been used effectively, while others suggested that this was more down to greater willingness to meet informally rather than official co-ordination bodies.

At the time of writing in early 2008, there was some discussion in the media about the possibility of establishing a National Security Council in order to coordinate security policy across the government. National security councils are a fairly common co-ordination mechanism, used by many countries around the world. In simple terms, they fall into two categories. The first type of national security council is a research, advisory and discussion body, which aims to ensure that security policies are coherent across government but it does not actually make and implement decisions itself. The second type is more powerful, since it has the authority to make decisions and require ministries to implement them. This type of council is also more controversial, since because of its authority there is a risk that it can become an alternative centre of power, undermining other parts of the government apparatus. In Bangladesh, the issue of establishing a national security council is sensitive due to previous such initiatives in the country's recent past. In particular, a national security council was proposed by General Ershad in 1981 as a way of giving the Armed Forces a greater say over national government, leading soon afterwards to military rule. As a result, there is considerable suspicion within Bangladesh that any attempt to establish a national security council is intended as a way to strengthen the position of the Armed Forces within government.

6.4.2 Corruption and accountability

Corruption is an issue that cuts across and undermines all aspects of policy-making and implementation. Various examples have already been given in this chapter about some of the direct implications of corruption on human security.[188] This sub-section expands briefly on this and also discusses how corruption might be reduced by strengthening anti-corruption and other accountability mechanisms.

Bangladesh is widely perceived to be an extremely corrupt country. One of the most widely used international indices for measuring corruption is Transparency

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187 Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, *Unlocking the Potential*, Section 5.449.
188 Iftekharuzzaman, *Corruption and Human Security in Bangladesh* makes a direct connection between corruption and human security, using information from large-scale household surveys to show the direct financial impacts of corruption in the sphere of human security. This section draws heavily on this paper.

International's Corruption Perceptions Index, which ranks countries by their perceived levels of corruption according to experts and opinion surveys. This ranks Bangladesh 162 out of 180 countries surveyed in 2007.[189] Famously, Bangladesh finished last or joint last in this rating every year between 2001 and 2005 (in fact, the index score of 2.0 has not changed in 2006 or 2007, and the improvement in relative position is due largely to more countries being surveyed, some of which gained even worse rankings). While such comparative studies are always open to question because it is hard to compare forms and perceptions of corruptions across countries, there is no doubt that corruption is a major problem for Bangladesh.

It is well recognised that high levels of corruption undermine governance, and by implication economic and social development. Similarly, high levels of corruption are a significant cause of insecurity. Corruption:

- increases the risk that events or actions occur that have a destabilising effect on human security, because resources are not spent appropriately (for example, when resources intended for relief operations are diverted by officials, or when the Police are misused for political purposes).

- restricts access to services, which should be equally accessible to all, due to the bribes that are demanded (for example, prohibitive costs to enter the policing and justice system);

- perverts the justice system because decisions are made according to financial or political imperatives rather than being truly impartial; and,

- short-circuits policy-making and implementation, because decision-makers are either thinking about personal gain or are beholden to political or economic interest groups, meaning that the human security implications of a given policy are not taken into account or are not adequately addressed.

Key informants and focus group participants regularly made a distinction between two types of corruption, 'needs-based' and 'greed-based' corruption. 'Needs-based' corruption relates to lower-level officials who believe that they do not earn enough to live and to support their family (or even that they do not have enough resources to carry out their legal duties). As a result, they turn to petty corruption in order to supplement their income. 'Greed-based' corruption, on the other hand, is grander in scale and motivated both by economic greed and by hunger for greater political or social power.[190] The relationship between these two types of corruption is complex, but it is widely believed that both feed off each other, and that the prevalence of 'greed-based' corruption in high positions of authority makes petty corruption seem more acceptable and 'legitimate' both to the officials that accept bribes and to the public that pay them. Combating high-profile 'greed-based' corruption is therefore believed to be more feasible than removing 'needs-based' corruption (until appropriate economic conditions exist) and is also needed in order to set an example within society.

Since the Caretaker Government came to power at the start of 2007, the drive to combat corruption has been very high profile. In particular, the Government has sanctioned the arrests of senior politicians from both political parties, including the leaders of the BNP and the AL, on suspicion of corruption. High-ranking bureaucrats and businessmen have also been targeted. One newspaper reported in September 2007 that 'the government published lists of the most corrupt 165 people as a part of its anti-corruption campaign, of which 66 were from the recent ruling party BNP, 44 from the AL, 39 bureaucrats and 26 businessmen. Among the arrested people on charges of corruption are former Prime Ministers Begum Khaleda Zia, Sheikh Hasina, Khaleda's two sons Tareq and Arafat, and many former ministers of both the political parties'.[191]

189 'Corruption Perceptions Index 2007' on Transparency International website: <http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/ surveys_indices/cpi/2007>, accessed 17 April 2008.
190 Anonymous interviewees, Dhaka, October/November 2007.
191 *Daily Manabjamin*, 29 September 2007.

The media survey for this research counted 120 corruption cases filed against 'very important persons' (i.e. senior politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen) between October 2006 and September 2007. It also recorded 72 cases, resulting in 57 arrests, on charges of money laundering.

The Caretaker Government has also overseen a reorganisation of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC). This committee was set up under the previous government in 2004, but had no impact as the government did not finalise and approve the necessary rules for it to become operational.[192] According to some media sources, this led a Vice President of the World Bank to call the ACC a 'joke'.[193] Almost immediately after coming to power, the Caretaker Government forced the three-member commission to resign[194] and a major shake-up of the ACC was undertaken in which new commissioners were appointed and procedures governing the role of the ACC were put to review. The ACC then began to investigate corruption with some vigour, which led the same World Bank Vice President to say: 'when I came [to Dhaka] last year, the media presented me as having said that the Anti-Corruption Commission was a joke. Believe me, ACC is not a joke now'.[195] The ACC is also seeking to clarify its status as 'self-governed' in order to ensure that it is free from political interference and to allow it to operate more effectively.[196]

While the Government's attempts to combat corruption are symbolically very important, it is too early to say how much long-term impact they will have. Internationally, there are few examples of countries that have achieved a sudden and lasting reduction in levels of (perceived) corruption, and until better practices become entrenched, there was always a risk that people and systems will return to former practices at the first opportunity. In Bangladesh, the medium-term political future is particularly unclear, and nobody knows which government will come to power in the elections scheduled for the end of 2008 or how committed it will be to continuing the work of the Caretaker Government to strengthen anti-corruption measures.

Over the longer-term, therefore, anti-corruption measures are unlikely to have the desired results until the political situation is also more stable. One of the unfortunate consequences of many measures that are meant to produce a long-term benefit is that reforms tend to create instability over the short term. Economic growth fell significantly in 2007. There a number of factors to which this fall can be attributed, including the worsening international economic climate and the succession of natural disasters that hit Bangladesh. However, several key informants also suggested that the Government's anti-corruption drive also had an effect because it had disrupted existing economic structures in the black and informal economy. One key informant suggested that the changes attempted in 2007 might become a good case study of the short-term costs of improving governance.[197]

6.4.3 Local government

Another key problem in terms of governance is the weakness of local government. This was noted as a major problem for human security by many key informants. This is because many security issues are essentially local in nature, and could best be dealt with at the local level, but local governments (and local communities more generally) lack both autonomy and resources. '[T]he share of [the Annual Development Programme] going to local government, including *pourashavas* (local government), has been no more than two percent…A second problem is dependence on central government grants…Central control over fund allocations, the budget review process and the

192 'ACC looks to CG to become functional' in *The Daily Star* (Dhaka), 19 January 2007.
193 'World Bank terms Anti-Corruption Commission in Bangladesh a 'Joke'' in *Asian Tribune*, 18 May 2006.
194 'Head of Bangladesh's anti-corruption commission resigns, government says' in *International Herald Tribune Asia-Pacific*, 7 February 2007.
195 'Opening Statement by Mr. Praful C. Patel, Vice President, South Asia Region, World Bank (Press Statement)' 3 June 2007. <http://go.worldbank.org/Q34JWVCHH0>, accessed 17 April 2008.
196 'ACC seeks changes to its constitution' in *The Daily Star* (Dhaka), 24 October 2007.
197 Anonymous interviewees, Bangladesh, October/November 2007.

dependence of local governments on transfers severely undermines local government autonomy in finance'.[198]

It is not only the overall framework of government that is extremely centralised, but also the way in which security provision is addressed by the ministries. Traditionally, policing has been very centralised, with all key decisions and investigations made by police headquarters in Dhaka (although the Police is now beginning to decentralise).[199] Local authorities and local communities thus have very little ability to oversee or input into the activities of the police in their area or to define policing priorities and strategies according to local conditions. Moreover, since local authorities have little influence over central government in most fields, there are few mechanisms for recognising local concerns relating to all other forms of human insecurity, from environmental problems through to tenure insecurity.

Previous attempts at decentralising power have met with little success. The 2003 ADB governance report was scathing about the lack of reform:

'Different commissions and committees were constituted over the years to reform and strengthen the role, structure and functions of local government institutions in Bangladesh. To date, no significant attempt has been made to implement the major recommendations of these reform commissions/committees. Almost all of the major local government reform efforts have focused on secondary issues such as the number and level of tiers, relationships between tiers, composition, and distribution and share of functions among the tiers and central government. This focus has neglected core issues of substance such as devolution of authority, resource generation, and steps to be taken to empower local government institutions to operate in an autonomous manner'.[200]

This is partly because centralised agencies are rarely willing to relinquish power downwards and are suspicious of local government becoming a rival centre of power. Moreover, the logic of political confrontation further reduced the will of any government from making serious reforms to local government lest that should empower its political rivals. The 2006 *The State of Governance in Bangladesh* report by the BRAC Centre for Governance studies argues that 'fear of losing political ground in the vital space above the union level has been behind reluctance to democratise the *upazila* (local government) and to concede power to Chairmen and Mayors'.[201]

The Caretaker Government, which has at least temporarily stepped outside Bangladesh's recent zero-sum politics, has regularly stated that transforming local government is a priority. In June 2007, it set up a committee on strengthening local government. In November 2007, this committee proposed four draft ordinances to replace the existing laws on local government bodies. One of these included provisions for the establishment of a Local Government Commission to ensure that local government bodies were able to work effectively and curtail the power of central government.[202] These proposals have been broadly welcomed within Bangladesh, and are now in the process of review. Unfortunately, it was not possible to obtain a copy of the proposed changes, and it is thus not known exactly what impact, if any, these changes will have for human security management and whether they will give local government more power over security provision. Another challenge is that elections to local government bodies are also expected in 2008; there is thus a risk that reforms might be derailed by political considerations as these elections approach.

There is clearly great potential for stronger local government in Bangladesh, not least because local authorities are still the main port of call for most people when they have a problem. The household survey showed that many Bangladeshis still look to local authorities when they have security problems, most likely because the central

198 BRAC, *The State of Governance in Bangladesh* 2006, p 86–7.
199 Anonymous interviewees, Dhaka, October/November 2007.
200 Asian Development Bank, *Bangladesh Country Governance Assessment (Draft 2003),* paragraph 102.
201 BRAC, *The State of Governance in Bangladesh 2006*, p 82.
202 'Local govt bodies to work freely' in *The Daily Star* (Dhaka), 15 November 2007.

authorities seem remote and inaccessible. Table 27 in Section 6.1 showed that Union Parishads/municipalities were rated as the joint-third-highest institutions contributing to stability. Figure 7 in the same section suggested that there was much greater awareness of the role played by these institutions than of most of the official justice sector. Table 36 in Section 7.2 shows that a significant proportion of Bangladeshis would still turn first to the Union Parishad in order to seek justice; there is high awareness of *shalish* courts run by the Union Parishads, and the majority of people who have gone to them have been satisfied with their performance (Table 37). Furthermore, people are most likely to contact the local MP, Ward Commissioner, or Union Parishad chair if they have a problem (Table 39 in Section 7.7).

All this suggests that the Union Parishad has a key role in human security that is not always appreciated. Communities turn to the Union Parishad in order to gain access to a range of service providers, including those relating to crime and justice. Union Parishads could thus play a key role in strengthening community security, as they are much more able to support a 'bottom-up' approach to human and community security than central agencies. In fact, they are a natural place to bring together communities and security sector institutions to explore ways of addressing security concerns. They also act as the main point of contact between formal and non-formal security mechanisms (Section 7.8).

6.4.4 Foreign policy

Lastly, it was also noted by some interviewees that foreign policy also plays a role in promoting human security; a successful policy can positively influence international and bilateral policies that have an impact on human security in Bangladesh. Indeed, various categories of human security are significantly influenced by regional or international drivers. Most obviously, environmental security depends on many factors that lie beyond Bangladesh's boundaries, whether this relates to climate change or control of water resources (which are shared with India). In a globalising world in which markets are increasingly inter-connected, economic security and food security at the domestic level are also strongly influenced by international trends, as the recent 'price hike' has shown. Some key informants also pointed out that with so many Bangladeshis working abroad and sending remittances home, this has also become a key foreign policy issue, both to support such economic migration because of the benefits it brings but also to ensure that the rights of Bangladeshi workers overseas are being protected.

Many 'traditional' security issues also have a strong cross-border dimension, such as the security of border communities or efforts to prevent trafficking in drugs (Section 4.3), weapons (Section 4.2.3), and human beings (Section 5.1.1). Counter-terrorism policy also has strong regional and international dimensions, particularly as there are regular accusations and counter-accusations in South Asia that Bangladesh, Pakistan and India are harbouring terrorists that other states wish to arrest (Section 4.5.3).

Bangladesh has sometimes had difficulties establishing clear foreign policy priorities and has lacked the capacity to promote its interests effectively on the regional and international arena.[203] Nonetheless, on some issues where there is national consensus, Bangladesh has managed to play a role more commensurate with its size and importance. For example, Bangladesh spoke on behalf of the Least Developed Countries at a thematic debate on climate change organised by the United Nations General Assembly in February 2008,[204] and its diplomatic work in this field is widely recognised. Bangladesh is also highly respected for its strong contributions to many international peacekeeping missions. Furthermore, Bangladesh also has some 'soft power' cultural influence through high-profile individuals such as Nobel Prize winner Muhammad Yunus and the success of his Grameen Bank and many other Bangladeshi NGOs,

203 Anonymous interviewees, Bangladesh, October/November 2007.
204 Rezaul Kabir AHM, 'Statement on behalf of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs)' at the General Assembly Thematic Debate on Climate Change, New York, 12 February 2008. <http://www.un.org/ga/president/62/ThematicDebates/statements/statementBangladeshLDC.pdf>, accessed 17 April 2008.

whose work has inspired people and organisations in developing countries around the world. All this suggests that where it is possible to come to a national consensus on the content of foreign policy, the country has the capacity to promote its interests quite effectively. The challenge that remains, however, is to formulate key foreign policy goals that would promote human security and to reach agreement within Bangladesh on how to promote them.

7

Non-formal mechanisms for human security

THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER analysed the role of the state in the maintenance of human security. It was acknowledged, however, that the state is but one part of the wider system of human security governance, and that non-formal (i.e. non-state) mechanisms play just as important a role as the formal state security sector; indeed, in some areas, such as the provision of justice, non-formal mechanisms appear to have more influence than the state for many citizens.

This chapter looks firstly at methods of deterring crime and achieving justice that are popular among local communities. It then considers the concept of 'social capital' and the extent to which community solidarity, morality and religion act as restraining factors; this is contrasted with attitudes towards and knowledge of the rights and responsibilities of citizens. Having looked at these more 'traditional' non-formal dimensions of human security, it goes on to look at some more modern non-state actors that have an influence on human security: private security companies, local non-governmental organisations, the media, and international donors and NGOs. The chapter then concludes with a brief discussion of the linkages between formal and non-formal security mechanisms.

7.1 Deterring crime[205]

As discussed in Chapter 6, the majority of communities (especially in rural areas and poor urban areas such as slums) have little expectation that the state will provide them with security; rather, they presume that they will have to protect themselves. This can lead individuals to take actions to deter or avoid crime, whether by keeping livestock indoors to prevent them being stolen or not travelling at night. Not infrequently, however, people also mobilise at the community level to establish crime deterrence mechanisms, particularly neighbourhood watch schemes known as *gram pahara*. These are not 'traditional' policing mechanisms as such (see below), but rather a modern and evolving response to the problems of local-level crime. They usually involve the men of the village taking it in turns to act as lookout overnight, ready to sound the alarm

205 This section draws heavily on BRAC, *The State of Governance in Bangladesh 2007*.

(often using the loudspeaker of the village mosque) if they discover a 'bandit' attempting to steal from their village.

Some schemes can be more advanced, however, going beyond simply standing watch, by taking a more proactive stance against crime in one's neighbourhood. BRAC's 2007 *State of Governance* report describes two case studies where communities have started 'self-policing' activities. In one, various methods were employed to try and prevent crime, including punishing criminals in a public manner to act as a deterrent to others. In the other – a slum – the community came together to take action against drug dealers and other criminals who were plaguing their area. This was done with the co-operation of the local police, who provided support for the establishment of a 'Community Police Committee'.[206]

The household survey asked people if they were aware of any such neighbourhood watch schemes in their area. It found that in total, 27 percent of respondents knew of such a scheme; neighbourhood watch schemes were much more common in urban areas (43 percent of respondents) than in rural areas (22 percent). Those respondents that had heard of neighbourhood watch schemes were extremely positive about their success, with 97 percent of respondents believing that they were at least moderately effective (Table 35).

Table 35: Perceived effectiveness of neighbourhood watch schemes among respondents who are aware of such a scheme (%)

	Rural	Urban	Total
Highly effective	42	19	34
Moderately effective	55	76	63
Not very effective	2	4	3
Completely ineffective	1	1	1

This support for 'self-policing', at least among those who have such schemes in their neighbourhood, most likely reflects the fact that whatever failings they have, they are locally-owned and are probably the best security measures on offer. Nonetheless, such schemes are not beyond criticism. As the BRAC report notes, 'many community strategies for coping with insecurity verge on vigilantism and few are troubled by any requirement of adhering to human rights. While these may indeed be effective in creating highly localised sites of community security against particular forms of crime, there are many instances in which these flout the rule of law'.[207] Furthermore, in terms of the distinction made in the previous chapter between 'reactive' and 'preventive' policing and security, these mechanisms are largely about deterrence and reacting to specific incidences of crime. They often do little to address the underlying insecurities faced by the community – meaning that there are few opportunities to change behaviours or use resources in a way that would build greater human security (both in terms of freedom from fear and freedom from want) over the longer term.

One other form of policing that also deserves brief mention is the institution of *chowkidari*. *Chowkidari* are 'village policemen' employed by the local Union Parishad, and are a remnant of the old colonial system of policing. Once largely controlled by rich landlords, in the late nineteenth century *chowkidari* were appointed across the country in order to prevent crime at the village level, but low pay and status limited their effectiveness. *Chowkidari* were put under local government administration during the East Pakistan period and this system has continued.[208] In practice, however, *chowkidari* are not really part of the formal system of policing, and have few formal links to the Police or other security providers (although there may be regular meetings between police officers from the local *thana* and the *chowkidari* in order to share information). Their main function is to report to the Union Parishad about the crime

206 BRAC, *State of Governance in Bangladesh 2007*.
207 Ibid.
208 Banglapedia online, 'Choukidar'. <http://banglapedia.org/HT/C_0229.HTM>, accessed 17 April 2008.

and insecurity situation in their area. However, since they lack training, are relatively few in number and are poorly paid (approximately Tk 1,400 [$20] a month), they are generally perceived to be ineffective in performing this role. It is probably for this reason that no mention was made of *chowkidari* in any of the key informant interviews, focus group discussions or in the household survey, suggesting that their impact on human security is negligible and any potential they have in this regard is currently not realised.

7.2 Community justice

Given that many communities do not expect the state to provide for their security (even if they would ideally like the state to do so), the majority of people prefer local – and often traditional – forms of justice provision. This is largely because of the inaccessibility of the official justice system (Section 6.3), but also depends on the seriousness of the matter in question. It may be assumed that very violent crimes such as murder are more likely to be reported to the police and go through the official justice system; for civil disputes, particularly over property, the willingness to resolve matters through the official courts may depend on various factors, such as the socio-economic background of the complainant and the scale of the dispute. For the majority of Bangladeshis, however, family and land disputes are more likely to be dealt with by traditional dispute resolution mechanisms.

This sub-section looks briefly at four types of 'community' justice: traditional village (or slum) *shalish*, Union Parishad/Ward Commissioner *shalish*, village courts, and NGO dispute resolution services. There is a strong degree of overlap between these different mechanisms in terms of their methods of working, of who is involved, and of the type of cases that are dealt with, but there are also some distinctions between them.

Shalish is a widespread form of traditional dispute resolution which exists in communities across the country, particularly in rural areas. The *shalish* is a mediation process in which one or more parties request a council of respected people to listen to their dispute and adjudicate on how to resolve the matter. There is no fixed size for the *shalish* council, nor any standard for who exactly should be on this council, though they are usually made up of local leaders or recognised *shalishkari* ('adjudicators', 'mediators'). *Shalish* meetings are not normally held on a regular basis, but are formed as required in order to address any problems that have arisen in the locality. The meetings are normally held in a public place, such as a prominent place within the village, and members of the public listen to the proceedings and may at times interject.

The process usually begins by asking the disputing parties to recount their stories and interrogating them to ascertain the facts. The council then proposes solutions, and determines whether the disputing parties are prepared to accept their judgement. If necessary, the head of the *shalish* council will impose a decision.[209] The council is not a formal structure and has no legal weight, but decisions tend to have a lot of authority because they are made by community leaders in full view of the community, and thus shalishi are usually perceived to be a fair way to resolve disputes. A survey of *shalishi* in two districts for the 2002 UNDP human security report found that the most common disputes related to family laws (21 percent), maintenance (16 percent), dowry (12 percent), land (13 percent) and second marriage (1 percent).[210]

Shalishi operate at two territorial levels. The lowest, most local level is the village/slum *shalish*. However, disputes can also be addressed at the Union Parishad level (which groups together several villages), where the *shalish* council is normally led by the chair of the Union Parishad and other members of the Union Parishad may also sit on the

209 Banglapedia online, 'Shalish'. <http://banglapedia.search.com.bd/HT/S_0281.htm>, accessed 17 April 2008; Alim MA, Shalish and the Role of BRAC's Federation: Improving the Poor's Access to Justice, (BRAC Research, 2004).
210 UNDP, *Human Security in Bangladesh*, p 92.

council. These provide an alternative to the village *shalish* in situations which require greater authority or where there is some doubt about the efficacy or impartiality of the village *shalish*.[211]

There is further overlap between the Union Parishad *shalish* and the village court system. Village courts may best be described as 'semi-formal' dispute resolution mechanisms. They have official status under the Village Court Ordinance 1976. This gives them certain powers to try disputes over property worth up to Tk 5,000. Unlike *shalishi*, they can summon a person to give evidence and they can impose a fine of up to Tk 5,001.[212] Village courts are also run by the Union Parishad, but unlike *shalishi* they offer an entry point into the official justice system. However, as with *chowkidari* their role in local governance has never been truly clarified and has been stymied by the lack of resources that affects all local government institutions.

The *shalishi* system is however, open to corruption and abuse of power as community leaders could use it to impose judgements that work in their political or economic favour; there is also a risk that they may be influenced by *mastaani*. Another challenge is that the *shalish* councils are not very inclusive. *Shalishi* tend to be run by the local elite and tend to reinforce the views and positions of these elites. It is rare for women, minorities and those of lower socio-economic class to sit on *shalish* councils, which may further bias their judgements. The forms of punishment favoured by *shalishi*, while often reflecting the local mood, can conflict with human rights principles and can at times be extreme.[213] This potential, in recent years, has resulted in some NGOs offering alternative dispute resolution services.

The household survey asked respondents a number of questions about their attitudes towards non-formal justice mechanisms. Firstly, they were asked what institution they would go to in order to seek justice for criminal or unlawful acts (Table 36). This found that traditional *shalishi* were the most popular dispute resolution mechanism (36 percent of respondents). However, 35 percents still said that they would go to a formal court in order to seek justice, a higher figure than might have been expected given other results from this survey. Union Parishads and village courts also play an important role, but few respondents (only 2 percent) reported that they would go to an NGO conflict resolution mechanism.

Table 36: Preferred institution to seek justice for crimes and unlawful acts
(% of responses)

Institution	%
Local traditional dispute resolution (e.g. *shalish*)	36
Formal court	35
Union Parishad/Village court	26
NGO	2
Others (e.g. Commissioner, RAB, Armed Forces)	1

More detailed questioning about knowledge and attitudes towards informal justice and dispute resolution mechanisms (Table 37) found that only a quarter of respondents were aware that NGOs are engaged in this field, and only 3 percent of people had contacted an NGO to deal with their problem. Among this small number of people, however, 94 percent said that they had received justice. This suggests that despite the fact that several major NGOs have moved into the field of alternative dispute resolution and have attempted to influence traditional justice mechanisms, their work either has not yet had the desired impact, or it has not been widely recognised. The most popular mechanisms by far remained village/slum and Union Parishad *shalishi*. There seems to be a high level of support for these institutions, with the vast majority of respondents

211 Banglapedia online, 'Shalish'.
212 UNDP, *Human Security in Bangladesh*, p 95.
213 Alim MA, *Shalish and the Role of BRAC's Federation*.

believing that they have received justice through such mechanisms. Perceptions on the relative helpfulness and cooperation of these institutions are very similar.

Table 37: Knowledge of informal justice and dispute resolution systems
(% of respondents)

	NGO	Village court	Union Parishad or Ward Commissioner *shalish*	Traditional dispute resolution (village/slum *shalish*)
Aware of the system	27	51	94	97
Contacted to resolve problems	3	12	17	17
Received justice (% of those who sought)	94	93	87	93
Level of cooperation				
Very helpful	38	42	30	36
Fairly helpful	38	41	41	39
Not very helpful	25	13	18	18
Not at all helpful	0	5	12	7

Given the corruption and slowness of the official justice system, it may at first seem surprising that there is not greater conflict and violence within Bangladesh than there is. There are several reasons for this, including social and cultural factors, but it is clear that these informal justice mechanisms are crucial to the overall maintenance of peace and security within the country. Although they do have their failings, and may not be entirely inclusive, in fact they are by far the most accessible form of justice for much of the population. Yet the results of the household survey suggest that it is not simply a matter of 'making do' – while there is still a strong demand for the official court system, *shalishi* are seen as a quick and effective way of dealing with many of the major problems that affect day-to-day life. This gives people at least some confidence that a just resolution can be found to conflicts that arise which may prevent conflicts from escalating.

7.3 Private security companies

Across the world, private security companies (PSCs) have come to play an increasingly important role in the provision of security in the last 20 years. There are many factors driving this, from a trend towards privatisation through to demands for extra protection in light of fears about crime and terrorism. In Bangladesh, the private security industry first emerged in the mid-1980s and has grown in recent years. There are estimated to be about 250-300 PSCs, employing approximately 200,000 people. These range from very large, well-organised companies through to ones with just a few employees.

PSCs in Bangladesh perform a variety of functions, including the protection of key institutions (including many international embassies, businesses, NGOs, etc.), private homes (in richer communities, such as the Gulshan area of Dhaka) and close protection for VIPs. They also guard important industrial installations and other infrastructure in locations across the country.

PSCs were initially unregulated, but as they grew in size and their work became more visible, concerns were raised about the level of training and experience of many private security guards. The Police also alleged that in some cases, private security guards abetted criminals or were even involved themselves.[214] This led the previous

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214 'Act proposed to control pvt security agencies' in *The Daily Star* (Dhaka), 12 September 2005.

government to draft the Private Security Service Act in order to bring order to the sector. This move was initially viewed with suspicion by some companies within the private security industry, who feared that the Government was trying to bring the industry under direct control rather than simply to regulate it. However, long consultations between the Government and the Bangladesh Professional Security Providers Association eventually resulted in a law which satisfied all parties.[215] The Act passed into law in early 2007.

One of the key provisions of the law is that all PSCs have to be licensed as of 1 January 2008. In order to gain a two-year license from the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) or district magistrates (depending on where the firm is based), a company must provide a variety of documents, submit saving certificates worth Tk 500,000 as a refundable deposit, and pay a licence fee of Tk 200,000.[216] It is expected that these strict conditions will prevent small unregulated PSCs from operating, and will lead to the consolidation and expansion of the industry. The Private Security Service Act does not allow PSCs to carry firearms (clients who require armed protection can hire 'embedded Ansar' troops, who are allowed to carry a firearm).

Internationally, the spread of PSCs has been controversial, especially as they perform some crime deterrence and policing functions without being trained in the same way as the Police or being subject to the national laws that govern police behaviour. This survey did not directly research attitudes and concerns about PSCs. However, it is clear that to some extent, PSCs are filling a gap that the state could not fill. Furthermore, the trend towards richer neighbourhoods and businesses employing PSCs could in theory mean that the state can use its resources more efficiently, facing less pressure to protect the powerful and spending more time trying to boost security in more vulnerable neighbourhoods. What seems certain, however, is that the role of PSCs in maintaining basic security in urban locations is likely to grow.

7.4 Non-governmental organisations

Non-government organisations (NGOs) play a very important role within Bangladesh. There are thousands of NGOs, ranging from very small, locally-based organisations through to organisations employing several thousand people with contacts across the country. It is thus difficult to generalise, and this research did not attempt to analyse the role that NGOs play in the maintenance of human security in detail. However, a few general observations can be made.

Firstly, it is obvious that NGOs play a very large role in poverty reduction and development, and by extension, 'freedom from want' human security. In particular, Bangladesh is well-known as the birthplace of micro-credit schemes. Many NGOs now operate as micro-financing institutions, providing small loans and other financial services such as savings and insurance to poor people (mostly poor women). There are thousands of micro-financing institutions, though the majority of such activity is carried out by four organisations (Grameen Bank, ASA, Proshika and BRAC) nicknamed the 'Big Four'. Overall, micro-financing institutions lend to more than 16 million people and have a massive impact on the lives of the poor. A 2005 World Bank study found that 'microcredit has had a positive impact on several individual and household outcomes in Bangladesh, most clearly on consumption smoothing and social indicators'.[217] NGOs are also very active in healthcare and education.

So far, NGOs have not been as active in 'freedom from fear' issues surrounding crime and insecurity. This is not to say that NGOs do not do anything in this sphere at all. For example, NGOs have engaged actively in access to justice through the provision of

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215 Anonymous interviewee, Dhaka, October/November 2007.
216 'Licence must for pvt security firms' in *The Daily Star* (Dhaka), 7 December 2007.
217 World Bank Poverty and Economic Management Sector Unit – South Asia Region, *Economics and Governance of Nongovernmental Organizations in Bangladesh*, (World Bank, 2006), p.20.

legal aid and promoted the use of alternative and traditional justice resolution, though the results of the household survey suggest that their contributions to this field are yet to be recognised (Section 6.1). NGOs are also playing a prominent role in combating acid violence, domestic violence and human trafficking, while there are also a number of NGOs working on drug control and harm reduction. Where NGOs do not appear to play a significant role at the time of writing is in the fields of policing and community security.

BRAC's *The State of Governance 2007* report makes a similar observation: 'there has been little emphasis to date on interventions to support community-based security strategies: this merits considerably greater attention than it has received to date, and should become part of strategies for supporting informal justice systems… to date, NGOs have been notably absent, although the Government and the police have made some notable attempts to engage with local communities on security issues'.[218] Without further research, it is difficult to know exactly why this is the case. In part, it may be because 'security' is not seen as an important issue compared to other development imperatives, and linkages are not made between different forms of insecurity. Another likely reason may be that few NGOs have the skills or awareness to work in this area and are uncomfortable about the prospect of working on 'security' issues.

Despite a general perception that NGOs are motivated by altruistic aims and have contributed enormously to social development in the past three decades, one note of caution should be struck. In some focus group discussions, considerable suspicion was reported towards NGOs. Some focus group participants reported stories of people becoming trapped in a cycle of debt, borrowing from one NGO to pay off rising inter-est on micro-credit from another NGO, and gradually falling into greater and greater debt – much as can happen within the formal banking system. Hence, although NGOs are generally assumed to have good intentions and be a force for good, their size and significance have complicated their role; and for some people at least, they are just as likely to be seen as a source of insecurity.

7.5 **The media**

Indirectly, the media have a very important role to play in human security. For a start, they can raise awareness of both problems that are facing society, and also about the proposed solutions to these problems. Healthy media are vital for disseminating information and sharing knowledge. Secondly, the media can hold government and other powerful figures (such as rich businessmen) to account, exposing cases of corruption or incompetence. This does not happen automatically, however, and depends on the skills and integrity of journalists, and the overall climate of media freedom. Furthermore, the media do not necessarily always make a positive contribution to human security: they can also disseminate misinformation or shape public opinion in ways that may fuel insecurity (for example by stoking political conflict or by presenting negative stereotypes of minority communities).

The extent to which the Bangladeshi media are free to do their job, and to provide alternative viewpoints and ideas to the public is questionable. Two of the most recognised international NGOs which analyse media freedom across the world have raised serious concerns about the freedom of the media. Freedom House, an American-based NGO, publishes an annual *Freedom of the Press* survey which rates press freedom in each country. This has consistently placed Bangladesh in the category of countries in which the press are 'not free'. The rating is based on three factors of press freedom: the legal environment; the political environment; and the economic environment. Bangladesh's 'not free' rating is primarily due to negative ratings on the political environment. The *Freedom of the Press 2007* country report on Bangladesh, which

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218   BRAC, *The State of Governance in Bangladesh 2007.*

analyses media freedom for 2006, states that 'although the constitution provides for freedom of expression subject to "reasonable restrictions", the press is constrained by national security legislation as well as sedition and criminal libel laws. Journalists continue to be slapped with contempt of court and defamation charges or arrested under the 1974 Special Powers Act (which allows detentions of up to 90 days without trial) in reprisal for filing stories critical of government officials or policies'.[219] A second organisation, the French-based Reporters Sans Frontières (Reporters Without Borders), also argued that 'a perpetual political crisis prevented the press from working normally in 2006. Politicians pursued numbers of abusive defamation cases, putting journalists at risk of arrest'.[220]

The other main cause of concern in recent years is the threat of violence facing journalists. Freedom House states that 'journalists are regularly harassed and violently attacked by a range of actors, including organized crime groups, political parties and their supporters, government authorities, and leftist and Islamist militant groups'.[221] Similarly, Reporters Without Borders reported that 'although no journalists lost their lives in 2006, there were almost daily violent attacks on the press by political militants, criminal gangs or the security services'.[222]

Under the Caretaker Government, there has been a significant drop in violence against journalists. Table 38 presents findings from the media survey on the number of attacks on journalists reported between October 2006 and September 2007. It can be seen that there was major violence against journalists at the height of political instability at the end of 2006, but after the Caretaker Government took power in January 2007, attacks on journalists fell considerably. This is noted in the Reporters Without Borders 2008 Annual Report (on press freedom in 2007), which acknowledges that 'there was a sharp decrease in the number of journalists physically attacked or receiving death threats from political militants and criminals'.[223] This may be attributed to two main factors. The Caretaker Government has put a stop to the previous culture of impunity surrounding intimidation and violence against journalists. However, journalists faced an equally serious threat from criminal groups, and the major improvement in security across the country in 2007 has also reduced the opportunities for criminals to harass or attack journalists.

Table 38: Attacks on journalists, October 2006–September 2007

Month	Injury	Killed	Arrested	Kidnapped	Assault	Threat	Attack on property	Case Filed
October 2006	34	0	1	0	11	12	5	0
November 2006	8	0	1	0	4	21	4	9
December 2006	3	0	0	0	0	3	1	7
January 2007	3	0	0	1	1	0	1	9
February 2007	2	1	0	0	0	1	1	2
March 2007	2	0	0	0	0	2	1	2
April 2007	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
May 2007	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
June 2007	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
July 2007	5	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
August 2007	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
September 2007	3	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Total	**67**	**2**	**2**	**1**	**16**	**41**	**14**	**35**

219 Freedom House, *Freedom of the Press 2007*, (Freedom House, 2007).
220 Reporters Without Borders, *Bangladesh – Annual Report 2007*, (RSF, 2007), <http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=20766>.
221 Freedom House, *Freedom of the Press 2007*.
222 Reporters Without Borders, *Bangladesh – Annual Report 2007*.
223 Reporters Without Borders, *Bangladesh – Annual Report 2008*, (RSF, 2008). <http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=25616>

Reporters Without Borders counter this optimism with concern about 'serious violations of press freedom' and 'dozens of cases of arrests, maltreatment and censorship committed by the army against independent journalists'.[224] However, key informants felt that while there was a degree of 'self-censorship' due to the state of emergency, as a whole the press had become more direct in discussing many social problems.[225] The quality of such discussions varies. Many media stories are limited to reporting the 'facts' of an event, without putting things in a wider context or considering their implications. However, some newspapers do provide deeper analysis in editorial pages, longer articles and supplementary sections. More generally, a range of views and ideas is always available. In political terms, some newspapers are perceived as reporting in a reasonably neutral fashion, while others are overtly partisan. The number of publications is growing. There has also been an increase in the number of private television stations available in recent years, which has expanded the variety of information on offer.

One thing that was noted by several key informants was that the radio sector in Bangladesh is relatively weak. This is despite the fact that in many ways it is the perfect medium – radios are cheap, they can run on batteries, and unlike the print media, they do not require the consumer to be literate. In particular, key informants suggested that community radio stations could play a very positive role in human security. On a day-to-day basis, they could help to raise awareness and share ideas on all sorts of matters; they could also ensure that cyclone warnings were disseminated quicker and faster. In the past, the radio had been quite strictly controlled (possibly because political governments feared its democratic potential), but there are now moves to open up the airwaves to more broadcasters. This could have a significant positive effect (indirectly) on human security.

7.6 International actors

There are a multitude of different international actors operating in Bangladesh that have some influence over the human security situation. These include international finance institutions (the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund [IMF] and the Asian Development Bank), international organisations (UN agencies, also the European Union [EU]), bilateral donors (Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, the Netherlands, Germany, Canada, Sweden, Norway, etc.), and international NGOs with significant representation in Bangladesh (Action Aid, Oxfam, CARE, Save the Children, etc.).

Table 39 identifies key references to human security, access to justice and governance within the country assistance programmes of the main international donors to Bangladesh (it does not however identify all programmes that have an impact on human security, as most development work can be expected to be relevant to human security in some way). The table shows that nearly all countries identify access to justice as a priority in some way, but there has been little focus on community security beyond support for the Police Reform Programme. Moreover, most access to justice programmes involve the non-formal justice sector and alternative dispute resolution, or attempts to promote the rights of the most marginalised through legal aid, but fall short of addressing most of the challenges involving the formal justice sector described in Section 6.3. The World Bank is candid about this. The section in its Country Assistance Strategy 2006-2009 entitled 'Support Legal and Judicial Reform' states that 'Bangladesh's justice sector suffers from many of the weaknesses common in developing countries'.[226] It acknowledges that 'the Government has made formal commitments

224 Ibid.
225 Anonymous interviewees, Bangladesh, October/November 2007.
226 World Bank, *Bangladesh Country Assistance Strategy 2006-2009*, (World Bank, 2006), p.57.

Table 39: Key references to human security and access to justice in country assistance programmes of international donors

Country/ Institution	Identification of human security/policing/justice in assistance framework	Key projects	Comments
UN	'Democratic Governance and Human Rights' strategic cluster lists four priorities, including justice and human rights[A]	Police Reform Programme ($16.4million 2004-2008) Access to Justice project to support separation of judiciary ($3m, launched 2007) Activating village courts ($14m, planned launch in 2008)	UN Development Assistance Framework identifies 'democratic governance and human rights' as one of six strategic framework clusters[B]
Asian Development Bank[C]	Country Operations Business Plan, Bangladesh 2008-2010	$50m earmarked for Urban Governance Management in 2010	
World Bank	Country Assistance Strategy 2006-2009[D]	'The World Bank, with its development partners…will work on ways to strengthen the demand for legal and judicial reforms and help build a broad national consensus on the need for such reforms and on priorities for justice sector reforms. This effort will center on encouraging and facilitating a dialogue within the justice sector and between the justice sector and civil society, academia, and politicians'.[E]	The Country Assistance Strategy argues that despite formal commitments to the rule of law and judicial reform, there has been limited progress due to lack of public demand and clientelist politics.
Japan[F]	Priority goal b) social development with human security Priority goal c) Governance	Support for police reform Assistance to the judicial system 'will be treated as a future agenda to consider'	'Human security' is seen here primarily in terms of education, health, the environment and disaster management.
United Kingdom	Country Assistance Plan 2003-2006 views political stability, crime and governance as risks but does not address crime and justice directly.[G]	Support for Police Reform Programme	New 'Interim' Country Assistance Plan to be published early 2008. Expected to have greater focus on justice and security.
USAID	Democracy and Governance objective (one of seven objectives, received $7.16 million in FY2006 out of a total budget of $46.9 million)[H]	Protect human rights and equal access to justice ($1.9 million) Reduce trafficking in persons ($0.5 million)[I]	
Netherlands[J]	Good Governance and Gender theme prioritises 'ensuring human security and human rights', also fighting corruption	Support for ILO programme to eliminate child labour and work to prevent violence against women	
Sweden[K]	Country Strategy 2002-2005 includes section on 'respect for human rights and democracy'	Support for ILO programme to eliminate child labour 'Special measures to strengthen the judicial system may be called for'	New country strategy in development
Canada[L]	Programming Framework 2003-2008 lists governance as first priority	developing capacity of selected public institutions and civil society in legal reform, access to justice	Primary focus of governance reforms is multi-donor sector-wide approaches, particularly in health and education
Germany (GTZ)[M]	'human rights, democracy, participation and good governance' one of three priority areas	Promotion of legal and social empowerment of women[N]	Programme on women's empowerment linked to gender-sensitive community policing

Country/ Institution	Identification of human security/policing/justice in assistance framework	Key projects	Comments
Denmark	Human Rights and Good Governance Programme Phase II 2006–2010 identifies Access to Justice as one of three components[o]	Support to: capacity building of judges in lower courts: legal assistance, litigation, legal aid clinics; multi-sectoral approach to violence against women; ADR mechanisms; countering discriminatory laws, policies and practices towards women, children and adivasi/ ethnic minority people	

A United Nations Development Programme – Bangladesh, Strategic Programme Framework 2006–2010: Democratic Governance and Human Rights Cluster, (UNDP, 2006).

B United Nations and the Government of Bangladesh, United Nations Development Assistance Framework in Bangladesh 2006–2010, (UNDP, 2005).

C Asian Development Bank, Country Operations Business Plan: Bangladesh 2008–2010, (ADB, 2007).

D World Bank, Bangladesh Country Assistance Strategy 2006–2009.

E Ibid p 58.

F 'Country Assistance Program in Bangladesh' on the website of the Embassy of Japan in Bangladesh: <http://www.bd.emb-japan.go.jp/en/assistance/assistanceProgram.html>, accessed 17 April 2008.

G UK Department for International Development, Bangladesh: Country Assistance Programme 2003–2006 – 'Women and Girls First, (DFID, 2003). <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/bangladeshcap03.pdf>, accessed 17 April 2008.

H 'USAID Budget: Bangladesh' on USAID website: <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2006/ane/bd.html>, accessed 17 April 2008.

I 'Data sheet on democracy and governance program' on USAID website: <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2006/ane/pdf/bd388-009.pdf>, accessed 17 April 2008.

J 'Good governance thematic area of democratic governance' on website of Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Bangladesh: <http://www.netherlandsembassydhaka.org/good_governance.html#top>, accessed 2 March 2008.

K Government of Sweden, Country Strategy for Development Cooperation with Bangladesh: January 1 2002 – December 31 2005, (Government of Sweden, 2002). <http://www.sweden.gov.se/content/1/c6/03/97/24/1030739e.pdf>, accessed 2 March 2008.

L 'Bangladesh Programming Framework 2003–2008' on the website of the Canadian International Development Agency: <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/CIDAWEB/acdicida.nsf/En/JUD-311109-LS8#51c>, accessed 2 March 2008.

M 'GTZ in Bangladesh' on GTZ website: <http://www.gtz.de/en/weltweit/asien-pazifik/604.htm>, accessed 17 April 2008.

N 'Project description: Promotion of Legal and Social Empowerment of Women' on GTZ website: <http://www.gtz.de/en/weltweit/asien-pazifik/bangladesch/20298.htm>, accessed 17 April 2008.

O 'Bangladesh: Human Rights and Good Governance Programme: Phase II 2006–2010' on website of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark: <http://www.danidadevforum.um.dk/en/menu/Topics/GoodGovernance/Programmes/CountryProgrammes/Asia/Bangladesh/>, accessed 17 April 2008.

to reform its legal and judicial system' and goes on to list some of the steps that have been taken, but then concludes that:

'Given the lack of public demand for reforms, however, progress on this front will prove difficult. While pilot reform programs to improve judicial administration are important initial steps, they are not enough to address the weak incentive structure at the root of many dysfunctionalities of the justice system. The rule of law is not in the interests of clientelist politics because it reduces the need for clients to seek the help of patrons in resolving disputes or enforcing contracts'.[227]

The World Bank therefore proposes measures to build consensus on the future of judicial reform, linking these with ongoing police reform efforts. While the World Bank's language is diplomatic, it is possible to surmise that the lack of political commitment from previous Bangladeshi governments for serious reform of the criminal justice system may be one reason why donors have not given stronger support to 'freedom from fear' reforms.

Assessing the impact of all these initiatives on human security is not easy. Although most have evaluation procedures to review the effectiveness of their projects and programmes, it is unclear how many of them specifically analyse the impact on human security. Even if they did so, it may not be possible to compare across programmes due to the different ways in which different donor agencies define 'human security' in

227 Ibid, p 57–58.

their work. In general, however, it may be assumed that their role is largely positive, although there may be times when donor priorities and conditionalities distort government behaviour in a way that does little for human security, such as by pushing the Government to undertake economic reforms that cause social unrest.

7.7 Social and cultural factors

Any study of the security situation within a country is likely to pay more attention to the challenges and insecurities faced than to what is working well, and inevitably this report has done the same. One of the most important findings of the survey, however, is that despite the multitude and scale of problems in Bangladesh most people do not believe that levels of crime and insecurity are so high. Section 4.2.1 suggested that for the majority of people, the impact of crime is not insignificant but not severe. The weakness of the official policing and justice sector suggests that this relative security cannot be entirely attributed to the workings of the state. The local and informal mechanisms discussed in this chapter mostly make a positive contribution to human security, but focus group participants and key informants also emphasised the importance of social and cultural factors (for example: values and morals, social and family structures, perceptions of what is 'acceptable' behaviour). Such factors are often overlooked, and are difficult to study because they are hard to 'measure' and thus analysis is always somewhat subjective. Furthermore, analysing the impact of cultural factors is fraught with sensitivity because of the implied value judgements on the 'quality' of the culture in question.

Nonetheless, it is important to briefly acknowledge the strength of social capital in Bangladesh. Social and cultural factors play a crucial role in shaping people's attitudes towards crime and other forms of insecurity, and are thus a major – perhaps the most important – form of crime prevention.
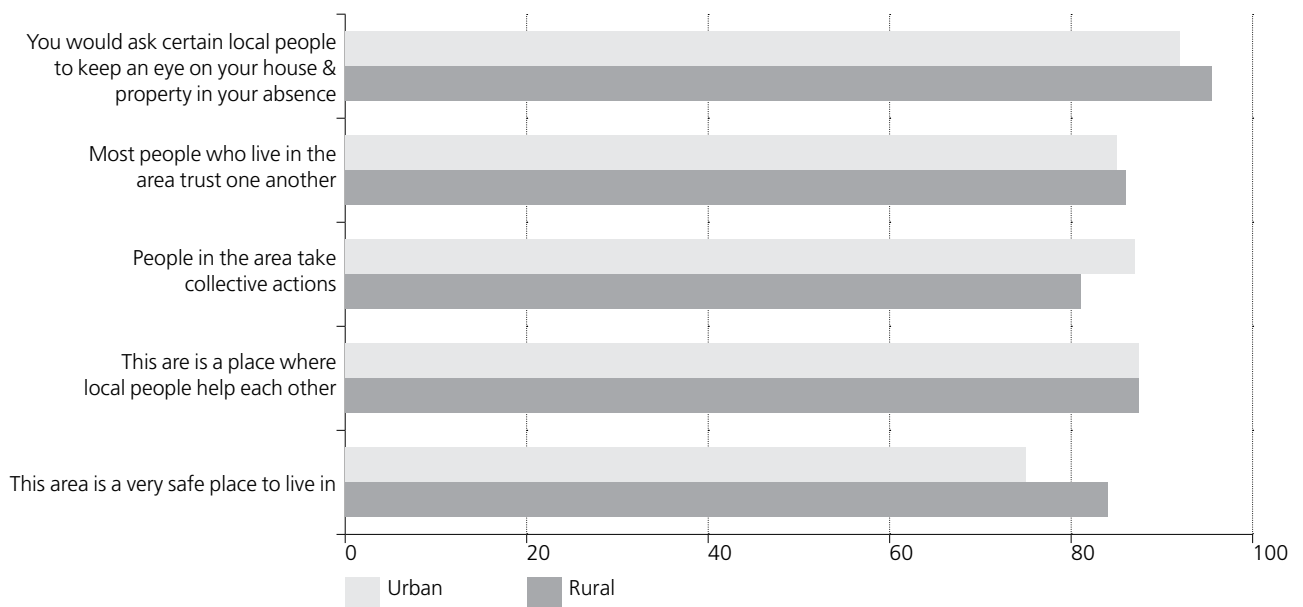

Figure 9: Security and social cohesion in the locality (% responding yes)

In Figure 9, household survey respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with five statements relating to security and social cohesion. The responses show that most people feel very secure in their neighbourhood (although it is notable that responses were slightly less positive in urban areas, with 25 percent of urban respondents not believing that they were very safe in their area). There is generally thought to be high levels of trust within communities and a strong willingness to cooperate and take collective action if necessary. Indeed, as Figure 10 demonstrates, over 50 percent

of rural males have taken part in some action to deal with a local problem in the last two years (those who had taken action were asked to identify what kind of action they had taken [Table 40]).
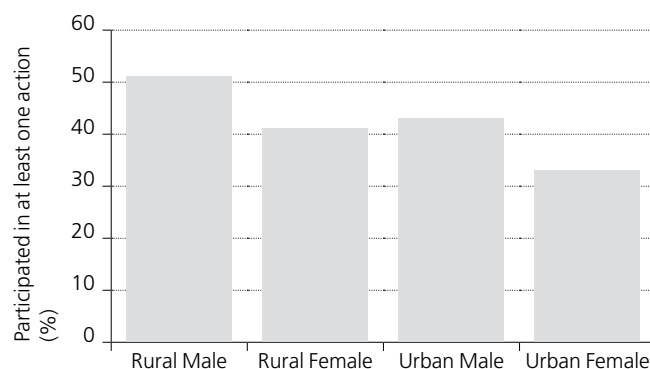

Figure10 : Participation in action on local problems in last two years (%)

Table 40: Actions taken to address local problems by rural-urban location
(% of reported action)

Actions reported	Rural	Urban	Total
Contacted the local MP/Ward Commissioner/Union Parishad chair or member	37	31	36
Contacted the appropriate organization to deal with the problem, eg. UP/NGO/court	23	13	21
Attended a public meeting or neighbourhood forum to discuss local issues	14	10	13
Contacted police	7	8	7
Formed a new community group to address local problems	8	4	7
Attended a protest meeting or joined an action group	8	5	7
Contacted a local journalist/newspaper	2	4	3
Thought about it but did not do anything	2	4	3

These findings demonstrate that there is a high degree of social cohesion and a willingness among communities, especially in rural areas, to address the problems they face. It was also noted by one international representative living in Bangladesh that a strong form of 'social control' exists, whereby people are very ready to intervene in order to prevent crime and punish wrong-doers: he personally had been in a situation in which he had had his wallet stolen, but the people around him had seen the thief, caught him and returned the wallet.[228] This social control is effective, but it can sometimes be violent.[229] There are regular stories in the press of drivers involved in car accidents being attacked by an angry mob;[230] some international organisations and embassies therefore advise their staff to run away if they are involved in a car crash.[231]

However, the importance of social and cultural factors goes beyond responses to social problems and crime: they also play a crucial role in prevention by shaping attitudes and behaviour. This report will not attempt to analyse these factors in any detail, but two factors were regularly mentioned in focus group discussions and key informant interviews that deserve to be underlined. Firstly, there are still very strong family bonds in Bangladesh, and it is thought that these connections are hugely important for instilling good moral values and codes of behaviour. Secondly, religion was also thought to be central to moral behaviour. Although the presence of a small number of Islamist extremists cannot be ignored, it was widely agreed that religion (whether Islam, Hinduism or Christianity) preaches peace and tolerance and provides an

[228] Anonymous interviewee, Dhaka, October/November 2007.
[229] 'Mob lynches 1 suspected mugger' in *The Daily Star* (Dhaka), 10 July 2006; 'Ctg mob runs amok again, lynches 3' in *The Daily Star* (Dhaka), 19 August 2003; '2 extortionists beaten up' in *The Daily Star* (Dhaka), 9 August 2004.
[230] 'Woman teacher dies in road accident' in *The Daily Star* (Dhaka), 19 May 2005; 'Mob damages vehicles as road mishap kills 1 in city' in *The Daily Star* (Dhaka), 21 April 2007.
[231] Anonymous interviewee, Dhaka, October/November 2007.

important moral framework. A couple of key informants also noted that the Hanafi school of Islamic thought, which is prevalent in South Asia, is generally perceived to be the most liberal and tolerant form of Islam, and that this too is an important factor in social stability.[232]

Some downsides to prevailing social attitudes were also noted by some key informants, however. While it is clear that they play a crucial role in creating an overall climate of security, they can also be insensitive to the needs of vulnerable communities. In particular, while the 'social control' described above may act as a form of self-policing for public acts of crime and violence, social pressures mean that more private forms of violence, particularly domestic and dowry-related violence, are largely taboo and are not adequately addressed by society despite official legal sanctions (Section 5.1).

More generally, several key informants noted that there is little dialogue about citizenship within Bangladesh. As a result, few people understand the idea that there should be a mutual relationship of rights and responsibilities between the citizen and the state. People are largely unaware of their rights, or how to protect them using legal means. Some key informants suggested that people's expectations from the state, or even from life more generally, are often quite low, which makes it more difficult to strengthen the rule of law within society.[233] With specific regard to crime, it should also be noted that the popular understanding of what constitutes a crime, injustice or insecurity may differ considerably from what is 'officially' deemed a crime, with people not even expecting certain types of insecurity to be prevented or punished. Rather than perceiving something as a crime solely on the nature of the act involved, many people take into account factors such as the impact or severity of the crime, whether or not it should be addressed by formal institutions, and the identity of the perpetrator.[234]

Despite these provisos, however, it is clear that there is a strong degree of social capital and social cohesion in Bangladesh, and that this, together with the moral values and attitudes that are transmitted within communities and families, is a vital reason why crime and insecurity is not much higher than it might otherwise be given the degree of poverty within the country. Many focus group participants were concerned about moral values and emphasised the importance of strict moral education and moral renewal for longer-term human security.

7.8 Linkages between formal and non-formal human security measures

Concluding this chapter, this section makes some brief observations on the linkages between formal and informal human security measures. It is often fairly unclear whether and how 'traditional' or 'community' justice and crime deterrence mechanisms interface with the official system. It appears that they largely live in two separate worlds, but with some points of cross-over.

Firstly, it needs to be acknowledged that the level of 'penetration' of the government at the most local level is often rather low – the government provides minimal or no services and has relatively little impact on people's daily lives. This is particularly true of policing, where there is no expectation that the formal Police, who are seriously under-staffed and under-resourced, will be able to provide security; indeed, it appears that many Bangladeshis would prefer to avoid the Police entirely. Non-formal policing mechanisms such as neighbourhood watches have to some extent filled this gap, but they are not normally linked to any official policing networks or resources in anyway (although examples of police support for informal 'community policing' groups do exist). There are some semi-formal links between *thana* (district) level policemen and the *chowkidari* village policemen. However, the general ineffectiveness of the

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232 Anonymous interviewees, Dhaka, October/November 2007.
233 Anonymous interviewees, Bangladesh, October/November 2007.
234 BRAC, *The State of Governance in Bangladesh 2007*.

chowkidari means that these linkages do not play a major role in 'official' policing. Furthermore, neither donors nor NGOs have paid much attention to how communities police themselves nor done much to promote community security mechanisms. On the one hand, this means that neighbourhood watches and other such mechanisms are truly 'locally owned'; on the other hand, it means they are isolated, are not subject to scrutiny and lack any standards or training.

Given the lack of capacity in the Police, it is in no position to replace these non-formal mechanisms at this stage (even if this is an eventual goal that would be supported by nearly everybody). Nor would it be wise to try to close down these mechanisms, whatever failings they have. Instead, the goal should be to try and build greater linkages between the two systems. Communities may have to rely on their own manpower to do daily patrolling and protection, but links could be forged between police representatives, other local authorities (such as Union Parishads) and community leaders in order to ensure that the Police can respond quickly and become involved when more serious crimes are involved. This could also allow the Police to manage its time and resources more effectively, and to build up trust with local communities.

In the justice sector, the links between the formal and the informal justice sector are more obvious, at least in terms of which system people choose to use. From the formal side, the benefits of non-formal mechanisms are sometimes appreciated. For example, it was argued by one governmental key informant that alternative dispute resolution, including traditional *shalish*, could be rolled out much further as one way to reduce the backlog of cases and unblock the legal system. Similarly, while the public prefer to use non-formal mechanisms to handle issues surrounding personal matters regarding family relations and (where possible) land, the limitations of the non-formal justice sector to deal with more serious cases is recognised, and people tend to turn to the official courts when necessary. In theory the opportunity always exists for somebody to apply to the formal legal system if they are unhappy with the decisions of the *shalish*. Furthermore, at the local level, Union Parishad/ward commissioners and also MPs act as a point of contact between the two systems since they have a formal role but are also normally respected members of the local community who will also sit on informal *shalishi.*

In essence, however, such linkages between state and other security actors are in themselves informal. Just as there is no clear vision for how the different parts of the security sector link together (Section 6.4.1), there also do not appear to be any defined procedures on how the state should interact with other mechanisms. The state is not strong enough to replace these mechanisms, but it does not seem to have a strategy for how best to make use of them and to work in tandem with non-formal institutions. As with policing, building these linkages could help to strengthen human security by providing a more coherent web of options to people seeking justice that are more likely to produce positive results. The current situation, whereby people seek to address most problems through non-formal means and turn to the courts only in serious cases could be more openly acknowledged, and resources in the formal sector planned accordingly to ensure that the courts deal promptly with major cases while the backlog of other cases is dealt with primarily through alternative dispute resolution.

Non-formal mechanisms thus also need to be supported, though one note of caution was raised by a couple of key informants. They feared that traditional structures and mechanisms were weakening as a result of growing interaction between urban and rural areas, and greater globalisation, as a result of which urban values are to some extent being transmitted into the countryside. There were fears that this could leave parts of Bangladeshi society in a limbo between tradition and modernity, i.e. traditional structures are weakening but modern institutions have not competently taken their place, leading to vacuums that may be filled with crime, drug abuse and other forms of insecurity.

Yet it would be unfair to finish on a negative. Even if there are no clear patterns for interaction between the state and non-formal factors of security, it can still be argued that non-formal mechanisms to a considerable extent fill the gap left by the weakness of the state in providing human security, particularly freedom from fear, and this may be a key factor in explaining why Bangladesh is generally fairly peaceful despite its many problems. Though there are many weaknesses regarding governance and access to justice within the formal sector, these are to some extent offset by the strength of other support mechanisms, including family ties, strong community bonds and traditional and non-formal security and justice procedures, which contribute to the 'rule of law' within society as a whole.

Section D

Conclusions and looking to the future

PREVIOUS SECTIONS have considered how to define human security and community security in Bangladesh, have attempted to 'map' categories of human security and how different vulnerable groups are affected by insecurity, and have analysed the role of both the state and non-formal actors in providing human security. This final section brings together some of the key findings of this report and discusses their possible implications. Chapter 8 makes some broad conclusions on the nature of human security in the country. Chapter 9 summarises key recommendations for a variety of actors who can play a positive role in strengthening human security in the future; this includes suggestions for further research.

8

Conclusions

THIS REPORT HAS ATTEMPTED to outline the main contours of human security in Bangladesh. The emphasis has been on 'the big picture', based on the hypothesis that many more narrow analyses either deliberately or inadvertently ignore important factors of (in)security. It is hoped that this research has shown that it is useful to look at the situation in Bangladesh from the perspective of human security. All people deserve to have a basic sense of security, regardless of their economic capacity or social background. This report provides a counterpoint to much development literature where the focus is squarely on poverty and shows some well-debated matters from a different angle.

On a positive note, **there has been a significant improvement in security in 2007**. Official statistics, the survey of media reporting, focus group discussions and the household survey all show that the situation has improved considerably under the Caretaker Government. The drop in politically-related insecurity is understandable given the state of emergency, but there has also been a major drop in various other forms of crime. The Government made improving security one of its key priorities, and the RAB in particular is strongly supported by the overwhelming majority of citizens for its role in combating crime and corruption. This perception is particularly related to crime and injustice: and may be one reason why **the level of insecurity relating to 'freedom from fear' is perceived as being relatively low compared to 'freedom from want'.**

Bangladeshis consider issues such as poverty, employment, food security, and health to be much greater concerns than crime and insecurity (see Section 2.2). Moreover, although crime, particularly personal property crime, is seen as a problem, the majority of people do not feel the impact of such insecurity on their lives to be large (Section 4.2.1). This is most likely because 'freedom from want' issues are so pressing that people have little time to even recognise, let alone address 'freedom from fear' issues, rather than because there are no such problems. Nonetheless, the level of crime and violence in Bangladesh should not be exaggerated, as some of the international key informants also underlined.

Yet **'freedom from want' and 'freedom from fear' are closely linked and often overlap**. To take just one example, tenure insecurity is driven by many factors, including: legal factors (lack of a coherent property management system); an overloaded and slow justice system undermined further by massive corruption;, economic factors (unemployment driving people to live and/or farm on any land they can find); land seized by business such as shrimp cultivation; lack of resources to protect/enforce property rights at the personal and national level; health factors (population growth causing ever increasing pressure on land availability); environmental factors (land lost through river bank erosion, as a result of natural disasters, or climate change);

and political factors (land taken from the poorest being taken by those with political connections and others fearing their land could be taken if there is a change of government). In turn, tenure insecurity contributes to various other forms of insecurity. It fuels further economic insecurity (there are weak incentives to use land more efficiently, and land cannot easily be used as an asset to lever other resources), and food security suffers as there is no consolidation of agriculture and many poor families lose their livelihoods. Moreover, the glacial pace of justice generates huge frustration, which sometimes overflows into violence between families, meaning that civil disputes can easily turn into criminal cases.

Since many insecurities and their causes are inter-linked, the responses to these problems also need to be better co-ordinated. **Development and security actors need to be more aware of how their fields interact** and this concept of human security bridges that gap. There is an assumption that because Bangladesh does not have a recent history of violent conflict (with the exception of the uneasy peace in the Chittagong Hill Tracts) and is not obviously overwhelmed by criminal gangs or terrorists, that 'security' is not a major issue. Certainly it is true that the security situation is not so bad, especially compared with many other countries with similar levels of poverty.

Yet there are at least three reasons why this attitude is misguided. Firstly, **there is a not insignificant risk that progress on economic and social development could be derailed by political and criminal insecurities**. This risk was brought into sharp focus by the tension at the end of 2006 and start of 2007. The state of emergency launched by the new Caretaker Government in January 2007 calmed the situation, but some commentators have talked of the danger that Bangladesh was heading towards serious instability or even civil war.[235] Secondly, while a stronger economy will grant more people 'freedom from want', the security situation is unlikely to improve automatically. Despite strong economic growth in Bangladesh over the last decade there was considerable concern that the law and order situation was deteriorating. An improved sense of 'freedom from fear' can only be fully achieved by reforming security sector institutions. Thirdly, economic development can generate insecurity, particularly if short-term adjustments hurt the poor or if the benefits of development are deemed to be unjustly distributed. The impact of 'development' on security cannot be ignored. A good example in Bangladesh would be the creation of the Kaptai Lake (reservoir), which was a significant cause of the tensions that led to conflict in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Another predictable but important finding of this report is that **different groups of people experience human security differently**. Two of the most obvious demographic factors affecting perceptions of security are location (rural/urban) and gender. Rural communities are overwhelmingly concerned with 'freedom from want' issues, including basic economic survival, healthcare, food security and protection from natural disasters. Urban respondents are also worried about these issues but are much more worried than their rural counterparts by crime, drug abuse, and political violence. Understandably, women are more likely than men to report problems with a strong gender dimension (dowry-related violence, domestic violence, sexual harassment, etc.); they are also slightly more concerned about 'freedom from want' matters relating to daily survival, such as food and health security. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to worry about 'public' forms of violence, such as violence on the street, land grabbing, political violence, and corruption.

In some cases, there is a contradiction between relatively low levels of public concern and worrying underlying trends. This can be seen for example in attitudes towards arms proliferation. Although certain forms of violence are quite common, violence

235 'The pandemonium and pre-election bedlam that brought the nation to the brink of a civil war – averted at the last moment by imposition of the 1/11 state of emergency – must never creep in again' in Dewan AA, 'Parameters of good governance' in *The Daily Star*, 2 October 2007; 'We want genuine people in public service, not impostors masquerading in politics. Who will do all these and with what authority? …The open secret behind this question is who did it on 1/11 as saviour of the people from the calamitous path of a looming civil war' in Brig. Gen. Kabir, 'All reforms in one package' in Strategic Issues, *The Daily Star*, 23 June 2007.

using firearms is not seen as a major form of insecurity. In fact, many violent incidents involve fists, and if they do use 'arms', these are more likely to be sticks or knives than firearms.

Nonetheless, illegal weapons are readily available, as shown by official statistics and media reports. **Illegal weapons are a significant factor in various types of political insecurity**. They are used as a tool of intimidation by people affiliated to political parties, particularly in universities. Though few in number, religious and left-wing extremists can use weapons in terrorist acts and cause major insecurity. The easy availability of weapons is also a boon to criminal gangs and those involved in drug pushing and human trafficking. Despite this, the availability of weapons is not thought to be a major problem. This is probably because people do not understand the linkages between arms proliferation and other forms of insecurity.

Similarly, **certain issues that would be considered crimes or causes of insecurity by external observers are not readily perceived as such by most Bangladeshis**. Common understanding of what constitutes a crime may be very different from formal notions and reflect different values. 'Crime' may be more associated with serious disturbances such as murder or assault, but domestic violence, for example, may not be considered as a crime at all. Moreover, while the most frequent type of crime against individuals is perceived to be property theft, there may be several factors that influence the perception of whether this is a 'crime' and how severe it is, such as the identity of the perpetrator and their motivations (with actions driven by desperate need more forgivable than those out of greed).

Beyond this, **certain forms of insecurity may have been 'internalised' and are thus not recognised as insecurities**. Because there is little belief that the police will prevent crime or that justice will be served, people may come to take certain things as being inevitable and 'just part of life'. Alternatively, they may take measures to avoid such crimes that become second nature to the extent that the original source of insecurity is no longer recognised as such: 'Responses to persistent criminal threats are hard-wired into our social structures and coping mechanisms, so deeply ingrained that we don't even notice them for what they largely are: the unbearable cost of preventing and coping with the threat of violence and unlawful loss'.[236] This may explain why the focus group discussions generally painted a gloomier picture than the household survey: when given time to explore their insecurities more deeply, participants began to recognise these underlying problems more clearly.

An unfortunate consequence of this acceptance of certain forms of insecurity is that it **perpetuates a cycle whereby people hold no expectation that these issues can be addressed**. People hold no hope that certain forms of insecurity will be addressed by the authorities or can actually be prevented. As a result, they cope by themselves and come to 'internalise' these insecurities. Yet because they largely do not even recognise these insecurities as a problem any more, there is little demand for solutions and thus relatively little pressure on anyone to address these insecurities.

Despite the improvement in security in 2007, **there are several reasons to expect that further insecurity lies ahead**. Firstly, the current situation is extremely unusual. Bangladesh was caught in an odd political stasis throughout 2007, which left everyone in the country – including those directly and indirectly responsible for certain forms of crime and injustice – biding their time to see how things would develop. Yet as this report has argued, the causes and drivers of insecurity in Bangladesh are complex, inter-twined and deep-rooted, and it is unrealistic to imagine that they could be permanently eliminated in a matter of months. This is not to say that the Caretaker Government cannot claim credit for the improvement in security – it is clear that the tough line and active measures launched in early 2007 are largely responsible for this. The Government has also undertaken a host of measures that are intended to address

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some of the longer-term structural causes of insecurity, such as pushing through the separation of the judiciary from the executive, giving security professionals much more freedom to instigate reform within their agencies (particularly in the Police), and giving the Anti-Corruption Commission a much clearer and stronger mandate. These are all important steps forward, and may contribute over time to more lasting improvements in human security. Nonetheless, **the current situation is unlikely to be representative of long-term trends**. Moreover, although there is strong support for reform in many circles, **there is as yet little evidence that the main political parties are truly committed to reforming the state security and justice sector**. Without political leadership, long-term reform will remain difficult, if not impossible, and it is possible that whoever comes to power after elections are held will undermine or even reverse some of the reforms listed above.

Secondly, it is an unfortunate truism that reform in itself creates instability, because it disrupts established structures and upsets vested interests. The Caretaker Government enjoyed a 'grace period' throughout 2007 which enabled it to initiate many reforms. By early 2008, however, anecdotal evidence (such as private conversations and the tone of some press reports) suggested that this grace period was over. The main cause of public discontent is the price hike that has affected many basic goods. The Government has been extremely unlucky, in that some of the causes of these rising prices – such as the three severe natural disasters that Bangladesh faced in 2007 and the high prices of wheat, rice and energy on world markets – were unpredictable and beyond the Government's control. Whatever the causes, however, insecurity is likely to increase and the Government's room for manoeuvre is likely to get smaller.

This room for manoeuvre will be further restricted as the third cause of instability approaches: the elections that the Government promises to hold by December 2008. **There is a considerable risk of insecurity in the period around the elections**. In the run-up to Election Day, political tensions can be expected to rise and there may be clashes between activists. Some unscrupulous figures from all the main parties may try to intimidate voters into voting in their favour (or not voting at all). Whoever loses the election is likely to take to the streets and make accusations of electoral fraud. Furthermore, extremist groups may seek to commit terrorist acts in order to create instability and derail the elections. The Government is aware of these risks, and is taking measures to address them. The Electoral Commission is overhauling many aspects of the electoral system and updating voter lists; the better organised and more transparent the whole process is, the less convincing allegations of fraud will be. The military is also expected to play a significant role in maintaining security around the elections. Yet there are enough actors that may believe that instability around the elections might help them to further their goals, and preventing this is likely to require considerable resources.

This report echoes the findings of BHSA2005 that **political insecurity lies at the heart of many human security challenges**. Factional political competition not only directly generates violence in the form of clashes between activists and *hartals* that shut down much of Dhaka, but it has also politicised many aspects of life and drives many other forms of insecurity: the threat of violence and instability in higher education; the fear that property will be appropriated by those with strong political links with the party in power; and the lowering of standards in the civil service when public service appointments are made for political reasons rather than on merit. More generally, zero-sum thinking diverts most of politicians' energy into this factional competition, as a result of which insufficient attention is paid to governing the country. Political insecurity is thus also a 'passive' cause of insecurity in that it makes it less likely that other insecurities will be adequately addressed by the state.

The unfortunate lesson of the previous few months, however, is that **outsiders can do little to force political parties to change their behaviour**. While the Caretaker Government has had notable successes in other areas, it is widely perceived to have

made little headway in 'cleaning up' politics. It rapidly began arresting senior members of the main political parties, mostly on charges of corruption. This included the heads of the two main parties, Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina, which was dubbed the 'minus two' approach. The logic was apparently that if key figures who were seen as obstacles to reform could be removed, this would catalyse major improvements in the way that the parties acted. Yet there is relatively little evidence to suggest that the parties have undertaken much in the way of internal reform, and their leaders appear to have strong influence over their parties even from their jail cells. It is certainly possible that the experiences of 2007-2008 will force all political parties to behave more responsibly, but there has been little change to the underlying political structures (with the exception of some high-profile corruption cases) and there is thus a strong possibility that political actors will continue to follow the same logic that they did in the past – though it is too early to say one way or the other.

Rather than focusing exclusively on reforming political parties, **the emphasis should be on opening up the political space**, as discussed below. This would not only make it easier for the public to hold political parties to account, which may force them to behave differently, but it would also have many other positive effects on human security. Across the key informant interviews, three key measures were regularly suggested.

Over the long term, **strengthening local government could have profound effects on human security**. While some forms of insecurity can only be effectively addressed at the national level, many concerns are very local in nature and the focus group discussions and household survey both suggest that there are significant variations in the types of insecurity facing local communities. Even most national-level problems can only be properly addressed with the support and co-operation of local people. It is clear that local communities are far more likely to be able to identify the problems they face, understand the context and design appropriate solutions than centralised agencies run from Dhaka. Yet local government is very weak, and local communities have little control or oversight over the actions of the state, including the Police (Section 6.4.3). The Caretaker Government has made a commitment to decentralising power to local government, and in November 2007 the Committee on Strengthening Local Government drew up a raft of recommendations to reform the system of local government. This is a positive step, but two notes of caution need to be sounded. Firstly, without excess cynicism it should be noted that promises to strengthen local government are nothing new and have repeatedly foundered in the past. Secondly, as the Committee has not made its full report publicly available, it is unclear what role and what powers, if any, local government is expected to have over policing, justice and other related areas of human security.

Secondly, more **steps should be taken to further open up the media to a wider range of voices**. In particular, the airwaves should be opened up to enable community radio stations to emerge across the country (Section 7.5). Radios are cheap, easy to use, do not require electricity and do not require the user to be literate. One potential use is to help spread warnings about natural disasters more quickly, but there would be other benefits. Talk radio would give normal people a voice to raise their human security concerns and empower them to engage more on such issues (see below). Collectively, such conversations would help communities to identify which human security concerns were most pressing and to debate appropriate solutions.

Thirdly, **citizens should be encouraged to engage in community security initiatives to address human security problems**. These would be community-based initiatives that sought to bring together representatives from all parts of the community, along with the appropriate authorities (Police, schools, Union Parishad, etc.) to analyse human security problems, propose appropriate and realistic solutions and implement them.

In fact, there are already many community-based initiatives in place. Indeed, it may be asked why crime levels are not higher when the performance of the police is rated so

negatively. One reason is that social capital is strong and cultural values play a key role in fostering good behaviour and a communal sense of the importance of upholding security. Beyond this, however, it is clear that **the strength of non-formal policing and justice systems play a key role in limiting insecurity**. According to the household surveys, it appears that about a quarter of communities have some form of 'neighbourhood watch' or 'community policing' mechanism, where the locals have grouped together to try to deter and address crime (Section 7.1). These groups may not always respect the law and may deal with offenders in a vicious fashion, but they undoubtedly deter some crime and provide locals with a greater sense of security. Traditional justice mechanisms such as *shalish* are even more widespread and are rated highly by a very high percentage of those who have used them (Section 7.2)

If such mechanisms already exist, what is the need for 'community security initiatives'? The answer is that they could start to address the two main failings of existing mechanisms. Firstly, **both formal and non-formal policing mechanisms are primarily focused on deterrence and reaction to crime, but there is little emphasis on long-term prevention**. The general view of crime prevention at the international policy level is predicated on the idea that most crime follows certain patterns and is driven by certain causes, and that by identifying these patterns and addressing these causes it will be possible to reduce the amount of crime that occurs. For the police and other state agencies, this means that as well as reacting to problems once they occur, they should also predict when and where they are likely to occur and try to avert them or be better prepared to address them. This idea is starting to gain currency in Bangladesh – for example, the authorities began planning how to police the Eid celebrations well in advance – and is likely to spread as police reform continues.

Yet while the idea of crime prevention may start take to root among state institutions thanks to the leadership of key individuals who are aware of international trends, and through vehicles such as the Police Reform Programme, there are less opportunities for this to happen at the community level. To date, **there has been very little engagement on issues of community security and crime prevention from the Government, donors or NGOs**. The Government still has very little input into safety and security at the community level. Many NGOs work at the grassroots community level, but they have rarely addressed community security in any coherent fashion. This may partly reflect the belief that community security is not a major issue, but it may also be that they do not generally see 'security' as an area that NGOs can or should work in. Community security initiatives do require the engagement of civil society organisations, however, and with strong NGO networks across the country, there is huge potential to build on existing structures.

The second main problem is that **the relationship between the formal security sector and non-formal human security mechanisms is unclear or non-existent** (as in fact is the relationship between different state security agencies, although key informants reported good levels of inter-agency co-operation at the current time). For the most part, local communities do not expect to have (or even avoid) contact with the formal security sector. Equally, the state barely acknowledges the role of non-formal policing and justice mechanisms despite the significant role that they play in the maintenance of human security. As a result, **linkages between formal and non-formal security and justice mechanisms are not well exploited**. Better co-ordination between the two could allow the state to focus its limited resources more effectively on the most serious security problems while non-formal measures are employed to deal with day-to-day problems. Co-ordination would also ensure that formal and non-formal measures are both working towards the same long-term goals and that citizens can move between the two when required.

Community security initiatives can help to catalyse such co-ordination. By engaging a wide range of stakeholders that includes both public representatives (including vulnerable groups) and government agencies, they can provide a means to build contacts and

dialogue between formal and non-formal mechanisms, encouraging them to work together to address specific issues. Where they are successful, they build trust and form a basis for future cooperation. **Community security mechanisms would also encourage grassroots engagement in governance and policy-making more generally**.

Some community security initiatives already exist in one form or another in *thanas* that are piloting community-based policing under the Police Reform Programme. Yet this programme can only do so much, and given the Police's limited capacity and manpower, it is unlikely they would touch the majority of citizens. There is a great deal of space and potential to help local communities to build an element of prevention into their security mechanisms, and it is hoped that this report will play a small role in catalysing this process.

9

Recommendations

THIS SECTION SUMMARISES many of the ideas that are considered necessary to strengthen human security in Bangladesh. Given the scope of the topic, it is clearly impractical to provide detailed recommendations on how to address every identifiable human security issue; instead, this section defines the main areas which need to be addressed. However, it is acknowledged at the outset that human security is a vast and complicated field, and there are no 'quick fixes' to long-term security problems.

A number of broad recommendations based on the research can be identified. These have been grouped into a number of categories: achieving an integrated approach to human security; creating bottom-up demand for human security; police reform and access to justice; insecurity around elections; opening up the democratic space; and other thematic areas.

A joined-up approach to strengthening human security

One of the key arguments of this paper is that there are strong linkages between different forms of human (in)security. In order to strengthen human security, therefore, greater awareness is required of how different forms of insecurity are related, and policy responses need to involve a wider range of actors. The following broad steps are recommended:

- **A long-term strategy for human security**. It is not realistic for the state to develop an overarching 'human security strategy', as this would most likely be a complicated, unwieldy and ineffective document. Nonetheless, decision-makers need to have a coherent vision of how they intend to strengthen human security. This would begin with a better understanding of the linkages between different security challenges, the linkages between sectors, and the roles of different agencies in addressing human security problems. On this basis, a broad blueprint could be drawn up of the reforms required across government to improve human security.

- **Moving from reaction towards prevention**. Another key argument of the report is that policy-making in many areas of human security, from policing through to environmental security, has largely been reactive in nature. Policy-making needs to become more proactive, attempting to identify the drivers and causes of insecurity, and developing long-term solutions to address insecurities rather than simply responding to problems as they arise.

- **Cross-governmental approaches**. This report argues that there are often strong overlaps between different forms of insecurity, with the root causes of one type of insecurity (for example, tenure insecurity) also linked to other themes in human security

(judicial reform, environmental security, etc.). This can in turn generate new insecurities (such as violent conflict over land). Adequately addressing these complex problems over the long term will require an integrated response across different sectors and government departments, whereby decision-makers and officials move away from narrow policy measures focused on their own department, and towards cross-governmental policy approaches. Therefore, development actors need to be more aware of the importance of security, especially in light of the political instability of late 2006 and early 2007; likewise, security actors need not only to consider security from traditional law and order and national security perspectives, but also to assess how security sector agencies can best contribute to improved human security.

■ **Linking up the security sector**. At present, it seems that the relationships between the various official security sector agencies are often unclear, with no firm delineation of respective roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, inter-agency co-ordination often depends more on informal co-operation than on formal mechanisms. Similarly, formal and non-formal methods of policing and justice largely exist in parallel rather than being linked together. Non-formal security mechanisms do not need to be 'officially' recognised by the state or brought into the state security sector; however, given the state's current lack of capacity to rapidly expand security provision across the country, non-formal mechanisms remain necessary. Attention should thus focus on how the potential of these non-formal mechanisms can best be exploited (and their downsides limited). This would also take pressure off the official criminal justice system.

■ **Improved capacity for policy-making**. Studies of governance in Bangladesh regularly identify gaps in policy-making, such as top-heavy decision-making, inadequate data on which to base policy, and a lack of capacity for policy analysis. As a first step, relevant agencies need to establish or strengthen their policy research divisions.

■ **Value human security as central to development**. In recent years, the Government of Bangladesh and the international donor community have both concentrated their efforts on economic development, poverty reduction, healthcare and education. All of these areas are crucial, and as this report shows, they are also central to the human security priorities of most Bangladeshis. However, on the whole, 'security' is not seen as a key development priority. This marginalisation clearly devalues the effectiveness of development: for as shown, issues associated with 'freedom from want' are often interlinked with those of 'freedom from fear', and vice-versa. Therefore, the right to live safe and secure lives is just as central to human happiness as other aspects of development. As a consequence, human security concerns (stretching across both 'freedom from want' and 'freedom from fear') need to be adequately addressed in development frameworks.

Creating bottom-up demand for improved security

Top-down reforms of the official security sector, however necessary they may be, can only achieve so much. To date, reforms in Bangladesh have often stalled, owing to a political system held back by negative confrontation and a tendency to favour special interest groups; an outcome greatly enabled by weaknesses in civil society. Instituting government reforms alone will not address this situation effectively. It requires all actors to change their attitudes towards governance. For example, the introduction of community-based policing within the Police Reform Programme requires a change of attitudes not only from the police, but also from the communities they serve.

■ **Bangladeshi non-governmental organisations should take a leading role in promoting community security**. This report has found that few NGOs are currently engaged on issues directly relevant to 'freedom from fear'. In general, action to strengthen the capacity of communities to address their local security problems

cannot be taken by government alone. Small, grassroots and community organisations need to have the skills and the confidence to mobilise on human security issues. Some of Bangladesh's larger NGOs could therefore provide support and capacity-building to local communities on how to develop community security initiatives.

■ **Empower disadvantaged communities**. In the focus group discussions in particular, it was found that many communities across the country feel isolated and powerless. They have little awareness of their rights and lack mechanisms to voice their concerns. Again, civil society organisations can play a fundamental role in supporting disadvantaged communities by raising awareness of rights, social justice and legal protection. They can also help communities to build networks and coalitions to promote their interests more effectively (which may be a precursor to, or a part of, community security initiatives).

Over the long term, small-scale initiatives to develop grassroots engagement in the provision of human security may have as much effect as centrally-driven reforms sponsored by the main security agencies – particularly since many security problems are local in nature and will require locally-owned solutions. The following steps are recommended:

■ **Pilot community-based policing initiatives**. There is great potential for small community security initiatives to unite the public and local authorities in the development of local crime prevention measures. This is a relatively new concept; currently, there are only two pilot programmes in Bangladesh, run by the Police Reform Programme and the Asia Foundation. More community security initiatives should be piloted in different areas of the country, drawing upon the successes and lessons learnt from these original projects. This could lead to a more widespread 'roll-out' of such initiatives in the future.

Opening up the democratic space

One of the long-term solutions to strengthening human security is to open up democratic space, allowing everybody greater opportunities to engage in the formulation and implementation of human security policies. Priorities in this field include:

■ **Strengthen local government**. The Committee on the Strengthening of Local Government has proposed a number of measures to reinvigorate local government. Improved local government would have a huge impact on human security, since many security matters are local in nature and can best be addressed by local communities acting on local knowledge and understanding. Future reforms of local government should accord due emphasis to a real devolution of power, rather than simply rearranging existing structures. Local structures need to be given more authority to make and implement policy on local-level human security measures, and should also be given greater opportunities to contribute to central policy-making on security. The Local Government Commission should have the authority to monitor the division of responsibilities between central and local government in security and justice provision.

■ **Tackle gender-related insecurity**. Gender-based (in)security is a cause for concern in Bangladesh, for it is evident that women are underrepresented in the policy-making process, and that they generally feel more vulnerable to concerns relating to 'freedom from fear'. Gender sensitivity should therefore be incorporated into democratic reforms so that the concerns of both men and women are equally represented. Many reforms could be made to address gender-related violence more effectively. These include:

  ■ increasing the number of women police officers, judges and other security officials;

■ better training of police officers and court officials on how to investigate sexual violence (particularly rape) more sensitively;

■ ensuring that victims of domestic and/or sexual violence can count on appropriate psychological and financial support structures, without which many women will not report this violence for fear of social ostracism and loss of means of support;

■ large-scale social programmes to raise awareness of how to combat domestic and dowry-related violence, and to reduce the social taboo against discussing such matters.

Measures also need to be developed to deal with the insecurity faced by female-headed households.

■ **Ensure freedom of the press and protect journalists from attacks**. A strong and independent press plays a fundamental role in sharing knowledge and generating ideas. The Caretaker Government and all political parties should commit to protecting journalists from the threat of attack, and to investigating any such attacks with appropriate diligence. Laws should be amended to reduce the frequency with which journalists are taken to court by politicians on libel or defamation charges.

■ **Promote the use of community radio**. Radio is a cheap and easy-to-use medium. Local community (talk) radio stations would provide ordinary citizens with an opportunity to raise their concerns. These could be very useful as an informal public consultation mechanism which would allow decision-makers and the general public to share information and ideas. Laws should be passed to provide airspace for community radio stations and make it as easy as possible to establish them.

Insecurity around elections

As Bangladesh moves closer to the general election – planned for the end of 2008 – there is an increased potential for insecurity, as confrontation between political parties could result in violence. Various measures can be undertaken to reduce this risk:

■ **Return of democratic governance**. It is important that the planned elections are held in a fair and transparent manner. This will allow the newly-elected Parliament to endorse the reforms already commissioned by the Caretaker Government, and facilitate the effective implementation of an integrated approach to strengthening human security. The staging of the 2008 elections will partly depend on the present Caretaker Government strengthening stability by continuing to support electoral reforms, and on the two main political parties ensuring that they campaign in a positive and peaceful manner.

■ **Continued support for electoral reform**. The Election Commission is currently undertaking a major overhaul of the electoral system, in particular through the updating of voter lists. It is hoped that these reforms will make the election more transparent and accountable, thus reducing the scope for electoral fraud and limiting the potential for violence and protests over 'foul play'. The international community is providing significant resources to support this process. However, it is a very major undertaking, and ongoing support is required in order to ensure that these reforms are completed and embedded in time for the elections to take place successfully at the end of 2008.

■ **Community-based planning of election-related security measures**. In conjunction with top-down approaches to electoral reform, local and national-level forums should be set up to encourage co-operation in identifying potential sources and forms of insecurity before, during and after the elections, and to design appropriate responses. These forums should be as inclusive as possible, involving local community leaders, representatives of the main political parties, the security agencies (the police, the RAB, and the Armed Forces), civil society organisations, local government authorities, and, where appropriate, representatives of the international community.

■ **Commitment to non-violence**. All political parties should make a firm political

commitment to reject all forms of violence during the election period, and to prevent any of their representatives from engaging in violent protest. Public awareness of the negative impact of electoral violence also needs to be raised.

Police reform and access to justice

Major reforms of the police are currently being planned and implemented under the Police Reform Programme. There has also been a significant step forward in judicial reform with the Government's separation of the judiciary from the executive. It is essential to build on these foundations and ensure that reforms continue, regardless of expected political changes in late 2008. Recommendations include:

■ **Political commitment to police reform**. All the major parties in Bangladesh should make a firm commitment to police reform, in order to ensure that the current process continues regardless of which party is in government. All parties should also commit themselves to fully respect the independence of the Police Reform Programme and should promise to abandon their former practice of interfering in the work of the police.

■ **Ensure adoption of the new Police Ordinance**. Updating the Police Ordinance 1861 is crucial to the long-term development of the police. A new Police Ordinance has been drafted which provides for the adoption of a modern framework for the functioning of the police force and includes many measures designed to strengthen its operational independence and accountability. The Police Ordinance is expected to be passed in 2008; it is vital that all major stakeholders agree on its importance, and that the provisions contained within the Ordinance are implemented as soon as possible.

■ **Consolidate the separation of the judiciary**. The executive was officially relieved of any control over the functions of the lower judiciary on 1 November 2007. This is a major step forward, but much remains to be done to build on these foundations – not least the practical inauguration of the Judicial Service Commission and the appointment of new judicial magistrates. Many new judges will also need to be trained, and the Supreme Court will need support to be able to discharge its responsibilities more effectively.

■ **Develop a long-term strategy for judicial reform**. The Government currently lacks both a long-term vision for the future of the justice system and a coherent, long-term strategy for reforming the system and resolving the many problems it currently faces – in particular, the backlog of cases and the prevalence of corruption. It is essential that such a strategy is developed, preferably with cross-party backing to ensure that reforms do not fall victim to political confrontation.

■ **Continue work on alternative dispute resolution and mediation**. Over the last few years, the concept of ADR has been encouraged and the idea of mediation has been promoted as a way to resolve cases before they reach court. It is hoped that this could eventually help to make the justice system more efficient and to reduce the existing backlog of cases. Some donor support has been given in this area. This support needs to continue, and the opportunities for the further expansion of ADR should be promoted.

Other thematic areas

As well as the broad areas described above, this report identifies human security issues in many other thematic areas. It is not possible to give detailed proposals for how to address insecurities in each of these fields, but certain key recommendations can be made:

- **Combating corruption**. The Anti-Corruption Commission has been reinvigorated in recent months, but it could be further strengthened by ensuring its operational independence. This would empower the commission to investigate and eradicate corruption in all sectors. Most government agencies should also develop their own strategies for addressing corruption within their sector, and within their own agency. In addition, Bangladesh's political parties need to increase transparency and tackle institutionalised favouring of special interest groups.

- **Tenure insecurity**. Much greater efforts are required to improve the system of land registration and land use, and to strengthen the protection of property rights.

- **Addressing drug abuse**. Drug abuse has been flagged in this research as a major public concern. High-profile operations to combat drug trafficking were undertaken in early 2008. However, these need to be combined with long-term measures to raise awareness of the risks of drug use and the social problems that it causes, to treat drug addicts, and to reduce the risks that drug users will turn to crime in order to fund their addiction.

- **Reducing political violence in universities**. Many aspects of life in Bangladesh have been subject to undue politicisation. However, the politicisation of university life is a particular cause for concern because of the volatility of student politics and the impact that political disruption has on education. Political parties should make a firm commitment to root out violence within the student wings of their parties and to cut all links with any student group which is proved to be implicated in violence or intimidation. Steps should be undertaken to reduce the grip of political parties on university administration in areas such as the allocation of university accommodation.

- **Counter-terrorism**. As well as continued efforts to combat terrorism through improved intelligence and police work, long-term strategies are needed to counter extremist ideologies. This may include a reinvigoration of Islamic scholarship in Bangladesh and improved regulation of madrasah education (including initiatives to ensure that madrasah education provides people with good employment opportunities). Community initiatives (for example, through madrasah boards, mosques and community leaders) should also be developed, to facilitate local programmes which will complement nationally-adopted counter-terrorism measures.

- **Small arms and light weapons (SALW) control**. An inter-agency co-ordinating body should be established to review existing SALW control policy and procedures, and to identify priorities for addressing illegal SALW proliferation (as well as linkages to other human security problems, such as drug trafficking). This should lead to the development of a national strategy to strengthen SALW control, tailored to the Bangladeshi context, and drawing on the framework of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

- **Climate change and human security**. Greater consideration needs to be given to the relationship between climate change and human security. Over the short term, initiatives should be developed to reassure vulnerable communities about security and crime prevention during and after natural disasters. Over the longer term, greater understanding is required of the human security implications of climate change and the implications for government policy, including in the areas of conflict-sensitive disaster risk reduction and natural disaster management (see also research recommendations below).

- **Protection of vulnerable households in the event of internal displacement**. People should not have to choose between 'freedom from want' and 'freedom from fear'. It is therefore essential that a mechanism be adopted that will comprehensively protect the human security of the most vulnerable.

- Rights of displaced peoples. Legal issues surrounding the rights of the Biharis and

the Rohingya refugees should be quickly resolved, and greater international support should be provided to improve conditions in the camps where the majority of these people live.

Recommended research

One of the problems faced by researchers investigating human security issues in Bangladesh is the scarcity of reliable information on which to draw. The lack of quality analysis is primarily a problem for the Government, as policy-making decisions are compromised by the absence of comprehensive analysis on which to base initiatives.

Improving the quality of government statistics and strengthening capacity to under-take policy analysis are clearly priorities for the Government of Bangladesh. Possible methods of data collection, collation and analysis could include:

■ **Crime and violence statistics**. There should be clear official guidelines on what infor-mation the police, the RAB and other agencies are required to record and publish.

■ **Disaggregating information at the town and community level**. Exclusive reliance on national-level analysis leads to an incomplete understanding of crime and violence. Insecurity differs significantly between locations and communities; information should therefore be recorded in a manner that will enable more comprehensive analysis.

■ **Understanding the nature of crime and violence**. There is a need for more academic research into security trends in different locations. Undertaking several such studies in different parts of the country would also allow for a much more detailed analysis of human security in Bangladesh as a whole.

■ **Perceptions of what constitutes a crime**. The common understanding of 'crime' may differ considerably from formal legal definitions. Further research is required into how different groups understand the concept of 'crime', as this could have significant implications for future research into crime and justice.

■ **Linkages between conventional arms proliferation and insecurity**. There are link-ages between illegal arms circulation and other forms of insecurity – particularly political insecurity, terrorism and organised crime. These linkages need to be explored in more detail, though researching such sensitive and complicated issues will be difficult.

■ **The human security of vulnerable groups**. Specific studies are needed into the human security of all vulnerable groups in Bangladesh. This could include sociological surveys focusing on particular groups, focus group discussions, community security initiatives, and further academic research.

■ **Poorly understood informal methods of human security governance**. This report has noted that non-formal policing and deterrence mechanisms play a significant role in maintaining human security in some communities. Given the prominence of such initiatives, further research should be developed to ensure that they are better understood.

■ **Human security and climate change**. Bangladesh is likely to be one of the countries that suffer most from the effects of climate change. The environmental impact of climate change is increasingly being linked to other factors, such as economic, food, and health security. Despite this, little serious analysis is available of possible scenarios for the effects of climate change on human security in Bangladesh. It is thus essential that this is addressed as quickly as possible, so that the implications for the interlinking dimensions of human security can be more fully understood.

ANNEX 1: Methodology of household survey

The household survey was carried out by BRAC's Research and Evaluation Division (RED) in October-November 2007 following extensive preparations.

A pre-coded structured questionnaire was developed following consultations with various experts and a review of similar surveys in other countries. The original questionnaire was formulated in English, with later versions translated into Bangla. The Bangla version was pre-tested in Dhaka slums and rural areas of Nilphamari district in northern Bangladesh. After revisions and training of enumerators, a pilot survey was carried out in Gazipur district. The questionnaire was revised and fine-tuned before being administered in the field.

The nationally representative survey sampled 2,000 households, with one respondent interviewed from each household, alternating between male and female respondents in an attempt to ensure an equal distribution of respondents by gender. The overall sampling was conducted by random (probability) sampling technique, done in three stages.

Experienced enumerators and field supervisors were selected, and the entire process supervised by a research coordinator. Before being deployed to the field, supervisors and interviewers were trained on survey research methodology. They were briefed about the intentions of each question, how to clarify questions, and how to prompt without leading respondents if they seemed confused or hesitant. Field supervisors also received special training.

Data was processed and analysed using the software programmes SPSS, STATA and Microsoft Excel. After the completion of the data entry, the data was imported into SPSS and STATA where further management, analysis and presentation in a tabular form were performed. A full report was then provided, which was used extensively in this report.

Composition of the sample by gender and rural-urban location

	Rural		Urban		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male	797	51.2	252	56.9	1,049	52.5
Female	760	48.8	191	43.1	951	47.6
Total	**(n=1,557)**	**100**	**(n=443)**	**100**	**(n=2000)**	**100**

Composition of the sample by gender and age

Age group	Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
15–24	122	11.6	145	15.3	267	13.4
25–34	202	19.3	293	30.8	495	24.8
35–44	247	23.6	287	30.2	534	26.7
45–54	212	20.2	155	16.3	367	18.4
>54	266	25.4	71	7.5	337	16.9
Total	**(n=1,049)**	**100.0**	**(n=951)**	**100.0**	**(n=2,000)**	**100.0**

Composition of the sample by religion, ethnicity and location

	Rural %	Urban %	Total %
Religion			
Muslim	84.5	84.4	84.5
Hindu	12.5	15.4	13.1
Buddhist	2.5	0.0	2.0
Christian	0.6	0.2	0.5
Ethnicity			
Bengali	96.9	99.3	97.4
Other	3.2	0.7	2.6
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Composition of the sample by educational attainment and location

	Rural %	Urban %	Total %
No education	33.0	27.3	31.7
Religious education	1.6	0.9	1.5
Less than primary	18.8	15.8	18.2
Completed primary	15.0	10.4	14.0
Attended secondary	20.0	23.3	20.8
Completed lower secondary (SSC)	7.1	11.3	8.1
Completed higher secondary (HSC) and above	4.4	11.1	5.9
Total	100	100	100

Composition of the sample by occupation, gender and location

	Rural		Urban		Total %
Description of occupation	**Male %**	**Female %**	**Male %**	**Female %**	
Housewife	0.0	86.6	0.0	81.7	41.0
Self employed (agriculture)	38.4	1.1	12.3	0.5	17.3
Self employed (non-agriculture)	25.0	3.3	42.1	2.1	16.7
Day labourer (agriculture)	10.4	1.1	6.0	4.2	5.7
Day labourer (non-agriculture)	6.9	0.8	9.5	2.1	4.5
Unemployed	8.4	2.5	7.5	1.1	5.4
Regular job holder (private sector)	4.3	1.5	9.9	2.1	3.7
Student	4.1	2.6	7.1	4.7	4.0
Regular job holder (government)	1.6	0.5	0.8	1.1	1.1
Irregular service holder	0.4	0.1	4.0	0.5	0.8
Total	**100 (n=797)**	**100 (n=760)**	**100 (n=252)**	**100 (n=191)**	**100 (n=2,000)**

The focus group discussions were organised and carried out by the National Forum for Peace and Security (NFPS) and South Asia Partnership – Bangladesh (SAP-Bangladesh). Organisational support to arrange a location and identify and invite suitable participants was provided by a number of locally-based civil society organisations in different parts of the country.

Eleven focus group discussions were planned to take place, covering many of the main cities in all divisions of Bangladesh. However, due to Cyclone Sidr the final focus group discussion, which was due to be held in Galachipa, had to be postponed indefinitely. The focus group discussions took place in October and November 2007, each lasting approximately two to three hours. There were 12-13 participants at each focus group. Discussions were facilitated by members of NFPS and SAP-Bangladesh. Guide questions relating to safety, peace and security were used where necessary to steer the conversation.

Participants were chosen to represent a wide variety of Bangladeshis and to ensure that the voices of many groups were heard (including those of minorities and the most marginalised). They were thus chosen on the basis of both demographic statistics (for example, ethnicity, gender, age, socio-economic position, location) and occupation. Various occupations were identified as particular targets, including: business men and women; students and teachers from colleges and universities; rickshaw pullers and other transport workers; garment workers; tea workers and stone cutters; land and sea port workers; fishermen; and fish farm owners.

Following the focus group discussions, NFPS and SAP-Bangladesh prepared an analysis report on the focus groups, including findings and implications, which was used to inform the writing of the overall human security survey (this report). It is available on request from Saferworld, NFPS or SAP-Bangladesh.

Focus group locations

Date	Location	Main target groups
04 Oct 2007	Savar, Dhaka	Garment workers (female focused)
07 Oct 2007	Dhaka	Transport workers, slum dwellers, small traders
23 Oct 2007	Dhaka	Business, SME, university teachers and students, lawyers, Police
27 Oct 2007	Jessore	Business, lawyers, journalists, NGOs dealing with human rights, Police
29 Oct 2007	Bagerhat	Fish farmers, fish farm owners, law enforcement officers
04 Nov 2007	Tetulia (Panchagarh)	Business, transport workers, tea workers
08 Nov 2007	Chittagong	Business, media, lawyers, port workers
10 Nov 2007	Cox's Bazar	Ethnic and religious minorities, NGOs dealing with human rights
16 Nov 2007	Sylhet	Ethnic and religious minorities, tea workers
18 Nov 2007	Sunamganj	Farmers, fish farmers
POSTPONED	Galachipa	POSTPONED

ANNEX 3: Methodology of media survey

The media survey was carried out by Campaign, a non-governmental organisation. A total of 89 key words and phrases were identified by Saferworld and Campaign. Nine of the most prominent newspapers published in Bangladesh were then selected. This consisted of six Bangla-language newspapers and three English-language publications (listed below).

A desk study was carried out of all nine newspapers for every edition published between 1 October 2006 and 30 September 2007. Using the key words to identify stories, the media survey collected information on the incidences of crimes, injustices, and insecurities reported in the Bangladeshi media over this one-year period. Using these reports, it was possible to prepare tables on the frequency of reported incidents of various crimes; care was taken to ensure that where the same story was reported in several newspapers, this was only tabulated once. The media survey also collected a file of significant and revealing stories. This information was then presented in an analytical report that was used to inform the work of this human security survey (this report). It is available on request from Campaign or Saferworld.

Newspapers studied for the media survey

Name	Language	Circulation, political bias and style
Daily Prothom Alo	Bangla	Highest Bangla circulation, neutral journalism
Daily Janakantha	Bangla	Joint second Bangla circulation, slight bias towards AL
Daily Jugantor	Bangla	Joint second Bangla circulation, slight bias towards AL
Daily Manabjamin	Bangla	Only Bangla tabloid daily, neutral journalism, special emphasis on safety and security issues
Daily Samakal	Bangla	One of leading Bangla dailies, slight bias against BNP
Weekly 2000	Bangla	Sister publication to Prothom Alo. Largest circulated weekly magazine. Reputation for neutrality and in-depth reporting.
Daily Star	English	Sister publication to Prothom Alo. Largest circulated English daily. Reputation for neutrality and in-depth reporting
Daily News Today	English	Neutral journalism
New Age	English	One of leading English dailies, slight bias towards leftist politics.

All these newspapers are privately owned. Their combined circulation is estimated to be about 1.5 million copies a day for the daily newspapers; the Weekly 2000 has a circulation of about 25,000. Estimating five readers per newspaper, their combined readership is approximately 7.5 million people.

ANNEX 4: Methodology of key informant interviews

Key informant interviews were carried out jointly by Saferworld and Bangladesh Institute for International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) between October and November 2007. Interviews were conducted with over 45 informants from government ministries and agencies, and civil society.

These included representatives from: Ministry of Home Affairs; Ministry of Defence; Ministry of Social Services; Ministry of Planning; Ministry of Women and Children Affairs; Ministry of Youth Affairs; Ministry of Environment; Ministry of Education; Chief Adviser's Office; Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs; Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs; Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Health; Bangladesh Police; National Intelligence Bureau; Rapid Action Battalion (RAB); Bangladesh Army; Bangladesh Rifles (BDR); Election Commission Secretariat; Attorney General's department; PROSHIKA; University of Dhaka; Grameen; Transparency International; Refugee Movement and Migration; Bangladesh Institute for Development Studies (BIDS); Caritas Bangladesh; Asian Development Bank; and World Bank.

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