

All students studying at IUB have to participate in a four/three-credit course called Live-in-Field Experience. This course is unique in Bangladesh, but its concept goes back a long way to social thinkers of our subcontinent in the early part of this century. The idea, in a nutshell, is to impress upon young minds the socio-economic realities of rural Bangladesh. It is a fact that nearly all the students in IUB have been brought up in urban areas and have little or no idea about "*Gram Bangla*". The future leaders of our society must know how the great majority of our people live. Otherwise they will be making decisions based solely on urban problems and needs in mind. This will be detrimental to the future socio-economic development of this country, because we cannot afford to have a sharp cleavage between the urban and rural populations. Even in the context of the urban setting it is imperative to know the rural situation because the urban areas are receiving an increasing number of "economic refugees" from impoverished areas of our country. These people are creating large pockets of overcrowded and unclean slums, which could trigger pandemic disease situations. These slums are potential centers of social unrest, affecting our politics, society and economic well-being. This urban situation cannot be tackled unless the flow from the villages is reduced. This flow will, to a large extent, depend on the relative available resource to the urban and rural sectors. Other factors which will play a part are: awareness of the environment and access to education.

The IUB student has to be made aware of this situation, so that they begin to think of ways to solve the problems and thereby open up opportunities for further social and economic development. This awareness will come from classroom lectures, study assignments and from living, for a few days, in a rural area. There is no substitute for their personal experience in visiting villages about their socio-economic situation, and seeing with their own eyes both rural poverty and rural development efforts. IUB has designed this Live-in-Field Experience precisely so that all of its students have this personal experience. They will find that the present situation in rural Bangladesh is a function of population dynamics, undeveloped resource base, low level of education and poor management both at national and local levels. They will see that over the past forty years there have been many attempts to improve the situation through projects and programs. Yet they will witness a pervading poverty. With proper guidance the students will realize that the root cause is poor social and political management of resources and opportunities. If LFE can give them that awareness they will have begun to appreciate the opportunities that lie ahead for Bangladesh.