

*Population and Reproductive Health
Oral History Project*

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Mohammad Alauddin

Interviewed by
Deborah McFarlane

October 3–4, 2003
Dhaka, Bangladesh

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Narrator

Mohammad Alauddin, Ph.D. (b. 1940) is the recently retired country representative of Pathfinder International for Bangladesh. Trained in social work and public health, Dr. Alauddin is widely credited with promoting a model program using operations research, demographic data and social change techniques. His work has been instrumental in the significant decrease in Bangladeshi fertility as well as improvements in maternal and child health.

Interviewer

Deborah McFarlane is professor of political science at the University of New Mexico. She is the author, with K.J. Meier, of *The Politics of Fertility Control: Family Planning and Abortion Politics in the American States* (Congressional Quarterly Press, 2001). McFarlane worked as an administrator and a consultant in reproductive health in the U.S. and internationally for more than three decades.

Restrictions

None.

Format

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Transcript

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Audio Recording

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Transcript

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McFarlane This is October 3, 2003. This is Deborah McFarlane. I'm in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and I'm about to begin interviewing Dr. Mohammad Alauddin. Could you start by telling me where and when you were born?

Alauddin I was born on 27 July, 1940. That was the date given my school teacher because I did not have the exact birth date available from my parents. That was a made-up date, you know, for my birth. I was born in a rural area. The village name is called Darishaya. It's in Tangail district, and the subdistrict is Gopalpur.

McFarlane And So you weren't registered right away, or—

Alauddin Well, birth registration was in vogue but it was not rigorously implemented. So birth registering was in paper, but not in reality. And birth certificates are not really— well, not at that time—used in reality of life. It was not required for admission to school, it was not required for getting hospital services, so most of the date of births that you will find of my generation are sort of made-up birth dates.

McFarlane Tell me a little bit about your family. How many siblings?

Alauddin We are eight in the family. We were eight. Now we are, still surviving, six— three brothers and three sisters. I am the youngest of the brothers and [older

than] the sisters.

McFarlane How interesting.

Alauddin So I had to take good care of my younger sisters. And I am quite affectionate to them, and also to my brothers. Because I am youngest of the brothers, so I got all the attention from brothers, and I had to give all attention to my younger sisters. And my parents are not living now. My father died in '81 and my mother died ten years later, in 1991. And I had the good fortune of getting good care from them, and also, from my side, I tried to give my attention to them while they were elderly.

McFarlane So they lived to be quite elderly? Your mother did?

Alauddin I would say both of my parents lived quite elderly.

McFarlane Did you grow up in the same village where you were born?

Alauddin I grew up in the same village. I went to school up to my tenth grade in the same village. The school I went to—let me back up a little. The primary school that I went to was within my village. And this school was not a government school, it was run by the community. And the school—the salaries for the teachers were not in cash, but in kind. You'll be surprised to know that the students used to go around on a weekly basis, it was Thursday, I remember, that we would go from house to house in batches to collect—what do you call a morsel of rice? The families would save one morsel of rice each day for six days and we would come on the seventh day to collect them, towards the salary of the teacher.

McFarlane And then was it sold?

Alauddin The teacher took the rice and, you know, he used it for his family

consumption, because teachers were also not very wealthy. They came from always middle-class families and lived on farming, you know, farm produce. So that's the way that the school was run.

McFarlane Was that an unusual situation?

Alauddin Well, most of the schools at that time, I would say, were run like that. Because it was run by community. And I think it was well run. The management committee used to meet; they used to come to this school, I remember, on an annual basis when the result was given to the students. The parents came and we used to buy sweetmeats and distribute among the parents. It was quite a celebration.

McFarlane Did everyone in the community, all the children, get to go to school?

Alauddin Not all. The school enrollment was very poor, I would say. [Only] those families who could afford to send their children to school. By affording, I mean those who could spare the children from family work, from farming work. Only those used to come to the school. We were the few lucky ones who came to school because we didn't have to spend time in the farm. But let me qualify. In the rural area, all the children, in fact, regardless whether one goes to school or not, helped the family in family chores. For myself, I used to help my brothers and my parents in household work, like taking care of the domestic animals when parents are away, or my elder brothers are not at home so you need to take care of them. You share all the family labor, even the children.

McFarlane Now, what did your father do?

Alauddin My father had a combination of both farming as well as business, trading

jute. Jute was at that time quite a marketable goods, and he used to trade in jute.

McFarlane Did he grow it or just—

Alauddin We also grew jute and sell from our side and also we bought and sell at the same market. So he was in the jute-trading business.

McFarlane Now, did your sisters go to school with you?

Alauddin All the sisters went to school, but they didn't continue. They didn't graduate from primary school. One went up to fourth grade. She was graduated to fifth grade, but she was married earlier. She was married too young.

McFarlane How young when she—

Alauddin I think she was thirteen, fourteen.

McFarlane And that was a common practice?

Alauddin That was a common practice. Early marriage was a common practice because—especially if the girl is beautiful and coming from relatively better off families. They were sort of given to marriage, or they were married off. But three of my sisters did learn how to read Koran, because one of the criteria that was considered important was whether you have learned Koran, whether you have learned to say your prayer. That was important. That was the question that would have been asked by the families who seek your sister or daughter in marriage.

McFarlane Oh, that was a criterion.

Alauddin That was one of the important criteria.

McFarlane So was the religious education integrated with the other education?

Alauddin It was not really integrated. The religious education was offered from the

mosque. So what you would do, early in the morning, after the early morning prayer, you'd go to mosque and sit in the mosque compound or mosque veranda and learn how to read Koran. And about 9:00 or about 9:30 to 10:00 you'd go to primary school, where the English media or Bengali media courses are offered.

McFarlane Now, your primary school—were you taking English and Bengali?

Alauddin Yes.

McFarlane While you're speaking Bengali at home?

Alauddin Bengali is our mother tongue.

McFarlane So you learned English at school.

Alauddin I learned English at school.

McFarlane And primary school goes up to what grade, again?

Alauddin Fifth grade. Still it is fifth grade. Our secondary school begins from sixth grade.

McFarlane To when?

Alauddin Sixth grade to tenth grade. So at tenth grade you have a public exam. You graduate from public exam in tenth grade, then go to college. Our college starts at eleventh grade.

McFarlane So this is similar to the British system.

Alauddin This is exactly British system, because the education that we have is still on British system.

McFarlane Okay. So you stayed in your village until you finished tenth grade, and then you went away to college?

Alauddin Then I went away to college, but not really away in that sense. This college

was also in a rural area. It was founded by one of the educationalists in our area. He was a principal of a college in a different area, but he founded this college in his home, in his village area. And this area is, I think, about fifteen miles away from my house. So I went to this college after I graduated tenth grade.

McFarlane So you obviously did well on the national exam.

Alauddin I did well on the exam.

McFarlane So your school is good.

Alauddin I consider that my school is good.

McFarlane And what were you going to study? What did you have in mind?

Alauddin When I went to school, in my college school—so I would say tenth grade, eleventh and twelfth—I studied liberal arts. And after I graduated in twelfth grade, I went to another college. This college was in a town, in our district headquarter. Our district is called Mymensingh; at that time it was a bigger district. This bigger district has been divided into five districts now. So I'm now in Tangail district, but the school I went to was in Mymensingh. It was the district headquarters. It was quite a change for me because I studied my high school and two years of college in a rural area. And then, for my B.A., bachelor of arts education, I came to a district town. It was quite a shock for me.

McFarlane You couldn't live at home, could you?

Alauddin No, I couldn't, because it was quite far from my village home. So I had to live in the same town where I went to school. It was a very good school, and I enjoyed my bachelor education there.

McFarlane And your general major, is it—

Alauddin I took economics, I took English, I took Bengali and then I took Arabic in my fourth grade. I guess I did quite well.

McFarlane Meaning? I mean your class rank?

Alauddin Yes, you know, I passed my B.A. quite well.

McFarlane And you have to take an exam? Is that—

Alauddin Yes. For every class, you have to take an exam and these are public exams. So I took public exam at tenth grade, I took public exam at eleventh—at twelfth grade, and then at my fourteenth year of education, I took another public exam. After you graduate, at fourteenth year, you become eligible to come to university for your master's.

McFarlane Interesting. Now, had your brothers gone on?

Alauddin My brothers stayed up to primary school. They didn't come for secondary education.

McFarlane So you were different in your family.

Alauddin I was different and I was performing well. I shouldn't say that I was all that different. I would say—I categorized myself as having been fortunate to do well in the primary school. And also my family decided to let me continue in the school, because my eldest brother and my immediate elder brother, they started working in the family field, and they decided that I should continue school and they would give as much education as possible and they would try to afford my higher education.

McFarlane So it was a family decision?

Alauddin It was a family decision, and I started putting in my best so that I could give

my family support by doing well on the exam, by doing well in school.

McFarlane What did you have in mind for yourself?

Alauddin That's a real difficult question. Until I was in B.A. class, I didn't know in which direction I was going.

McFarlane And you're pretty young at this point, too.

Alauddin I was, and the environment that I grew up in was really, I would say—there were few role models for me because I was the third, maybe fourth Muslim in my village, a village of about five hundred families, who graduated high school, tenth grade graduation. I was the fourth one.

McFarlane Fourth one?

Alauddin Fourth.

McFarlane There were Hindus in the village?

Alauddin There were Hindus.

McFarlane They were more likely to go to school?

Alauddin They were more likely to go to school. They are more likely to be progressing in education. So I was the fourth one and I was the first graduate. I was the first bachelor of arts. And I was the first MA, master of arts, in the village.

McFarlane So this is a source of pride for your village?

Alauddin That was a source of pride. And I know I sort of presented myself [as an example], through education, that other families could in fact also send their children, send their boys and girls to school, and like me, they would also graduate.

McFarlane So you became a model?

Alauddin I became a model for the village. And there are large numbers of boys and

girls now in the village who have graduated, who are in jobs, you know, who are doing well.

McFarlane Did you have any particular feelings about it at the time? I mean, you're doing something different, you just worked hard?

Alauddin I really worked hard. I really worked hard at school and I was inspired from the family because my parents—when I started graduating from one class to the other, my parents were so inspired, so happy that I was doing well. And that inspiration, in turn, inspired me more and more to do well in the exam and progress with education.

McFarlane So it was both parents that were—

Alauddin Both parents, my brothers, my sisters, and also my sister-in-laws. My sister-in-laws came in the family—the eldest one came in the family when I was in seventh grade. My elder sister-in-law came in the family when I was in eighth grade. They were also very affectionate to me. They had taken good care of me, and I was really inspired from the family that they were looking after me. Because there are fewer boys, fewer girls who had gone to school and were prospering.

McFarlane So it was a serious responsibility?

Alauddin It was. I took the responsibility on to me, that I should reward them with their investment, with their confidence and trust in me, that I would be doing better in school.

McFarlane And I don't get any sense that you felt different from your family, going to school.

Alauddin I was different in the sense that I was not fully investing my time in farming.

I was very much part of the family, yet I was somewhat different because I was growing up with education.

McFarlane Now, you finished your bachelor's degree and went on for your master's.

Alauddin Right.

McFarlane Did you have to choose a specialization?

Alauddin When I finished my bachelor's, I came to Dhaka for admission. But I was not admitted in my first attempt. I wanted to study economics but I did not have enough scores in my B.A. for getting into economics, because economics is a subject where you have all brilliant students coming from different colleges. There was tougher competition. So I—

McFarlane Mathematics?

Alauddin Mathematics and all that, because I didn't have mathematics in my B.A. And I was not admitted in my first attempt immediately after my B.A. graduation. So what I did, I took a job in a high school.

McFarlane Where?

Alauddin I had a friend in my B.A. class whose father had set up a high school, and that high school was only three or four years old, I think, and I went to that school. It was quite far away from my home. And I took a job as a headmaster of that school.

McFarlane And how old were you at this point?

Alauddin I was a little over twenty, I think.

McFarlane And you're the headmaster at the high school?

Alauddin I was headmaster at the high school. I didn't have any clue as to what the headmaster does, but I took that job. And through my job I came across a

civil officer of the subdistrict. He was quite an elderly person. And he asked me why I didn't go to university. With my academic career, I should have gone to university. And I told him that I tried, but I was not admitted because I did not have a competing score in economics. And he said, "Well you know, there is a new course began a couple of years ago. It's called social welfare, and you should try there next year."

And that's where I got the clue that something like social welfare exists, [and] I came to Dhaka and tried to find out, you know, what is this course about. And after I knew about the course, I became interested and kept track of when there would be announcement for admission. So in about a year's time, the announcement came. I came to Dhaka, got the admission form. The admission form was quite long. It required all of my life history, including what welfare activities I did, why I'm interested, what I would do after my graduation. So I filled out the form, staying in a hotel, and submitted the form and took the admission test, faced the interview board and I was selected. I was fourteenth in terms of selection.

McFarlane And how many people tried out, do you know?

Alauddin I don't exactly have the number, but I'm sure about three or four hundred.

McFarlane Wow.

Alauddin And I was in the third batch. We were third batch in that program. So I was very happy. At that time, there were even teachers from the United Nations. There were two teachers from United Nations.

McFarlane Interesting.

Alauddin One male, another female. Because the school was set up by United Nations,

division of social welfare.

McFarlane Now, is this at Dhaka University?

Alauddin This is Dhaka University. It used to be called College of Social Welfare and Research. So that's how I ended up in social welfare. And I was happy that I was in that program.

McFarlane After you got in, or—

Alauddin After I got in. After I knew the courses and especially coming into contact with non-Bengali teachers, English-speaking teachers.

McFarlane Was this the first time?

Alauddin This was the first time I came in contact with English-speaking teachers. Although I grew up in a rural area, I didn't go into English-media school. English was one of the subjects that I studied. Even then, I felt quite at home in listening to the lecture and in [taking] the exam in English.

McFarlane So you had had really good training.

Alauddin Yeah.

McFarlane What did you learn? I mean, what were they trying to produce?

Alauddin Social welfare was a new subject in the country. And there are three core social work courses. One used to be called Case Work, and there is Group Work. Another is Community Development. In addition to that, we had to study social administration, management of development programs. We studied statistics, we studied biology, we studied psychology, we studied economics—especially how economics is relative to the social welfare of the people, well-being of the people. We studied research. Research was one of the important requirements of the course. We had to do practicum. We had

to go to the community.

McFarlane Where did you go?

Alauddin I went to the old town here in Dhaka. This was the area inhabited by people called Dhakaiya. They are the real, original Dhaka inhabitants. They have different dialect, they have different culture. I went to that area. And in that area—

McFarlane By choice? Or were you assigned?

Alauddin No, I was assigned. It was an area where there is still tannery industry. You know what tannery is?

McFarlane No.

Alauddin Tannery is an industry where you process animal skin.

McFarlane Oh, tannery, okay.

Alauddin And this area has a problem with pollution, you know, they have bad smell.

Tape 1, side 1, ends; side 2 begins.

It was very difficult to withstand that smell, because the community leaders who were involved in community development activities, they had a youth club, they had a community center. These people, the community leaders who were involved in it, they were mostly engaged in this leather business, tannery business. So I needed to go to them in their factories and contact them there. So it was—

McFarlane Horrible, huh?

Alauddin It was horrible. Bad smell. (laughs) But you were not supposed to put a handkerchief or put anything on your nose. They would be insulted.

McFarlane What were they tanning, cow hide?

Alauddin Cow hide, goat hide, buffalo hide. Bangladesh is still a good place where you can get good leather. It's a good business.

McFarlane What were you supposed to do for them?

Alauddin I was organizing literacy clubs for them. I was organizing sewing clubs for the girls. I was organizing a debating session for the boys. I was organizing recreational activities, after-school-hours program for children.

McFarlane Were you well received?

Alauddin Yeah, it was very interesting. They were interested. They used to treat me well, offer tea and snacks in the same environment, so I had to eat them.

McFarlane Even though you weren't one of them.

Alauddin Even though I was not one of them. These people are very hospitable people. And I enjoyed my work. I had to write on a daily basis what I was doing with them, what activity I conducted with them. And my supervisor was very meticulous in going through my recording—it used to be called process recording. I think that's when I learned to keep daily records of the work that I did.

McFarlane Interesting.

Alauddin And that helped in following through what I was supposed to do next time, what activity I did in the past that I need to evaluate. And my English improved because my teacher corrected my English and even pointed out that this word is not appropriate here, you should substitute this word for this word because this is inappropriate. You wanted to say this but you used the wrong English word and that doesn't convey what you meant to say.

McFarlane So your teacher was really paying attention.

Alauddin She was. It was she.

McFarlane Was this the first she?

Alauddin Yeah. She was very meticulous and I learned quite well from her.

McFarlane Did you have to work through anything to have a woman instructor or—

Alauddin Not really. I knew that at the university level you had female teachers and I didn't have any—it didn't bother me. In fact, I was really happy that I had a field work supervisor [who was] female. Because, as I told you, she read my process recording so meticulously and she helped me select appropriate word in the sentence. I went through [it] with her, telling her in Bengali that this is what I wanted to say. And she would say that well, this word doesn't mean what you meant to say.

McFarlane So she was a Bengali herself.

Alauddin She was a Bengali herself, but she had trained in England. She had a diploma from one of the universities in England in social work. In England, most of the degrees that they award are diplomas in social work, not master's [degrees] in social work—unlike the U.S.A. So she had a diploma from one of the universities in England and her English was very good.

McFarlane So how long was your practicum?

Alauddin Social work is a two-year program. You have to have three months' practicum for each year. And then in the final year, you have to have a group research. You have to conduct a student research project, guided by the faculty.

McFarlane And you were in community development?

Alauddin I was in community development. And we had to undertake a research

project, and we had a very good teacher. I fondly remember him. He expired. He taught us very well. He himself was a very good researcher and conducted research class very well, gave good assignments, and then reviewed the assignment very meticulously. I would say that I got a very good grounding in social work education and this grounding helped me when I went to the States for my education. I knew what is expected of a student from an American university, because, you know, I had American teachers and also I had very good Bengali teachers.

McFarlane And British.

Alauddin And British, yeah.

McFarlane So you finish and you have your master's degree and—this is your family—I mean, this is completely new, isn't it?

Alauddin Yeah.

McFarlane And then what do you do?

Alauddin After I sat for the exam—in fact, before I sat for the final exam, for my MA, one professor—I think at that time he was assistant professor at Harvard University—he came to Dhaka. At that time, Dhaka was capitol of East Pakistan.

McFarlane What year?

Alauddin Sixty-three. It was East Pakistan. This professor, Dr. Schuman, he was a professor of psychology at Harvard University. I think he was an assistant professor at that time. He came as full director of the research project. The research project was sociocultural change in East Pakistan. He was visiting various departments for recruiting a research team and he was [giving] tests

to select his team.

McFarlane He was serious.

Alauddin Yeah, he was serious. So I, along with my other classmates, I took a test before the final exam of my master's program. I took a test and, fortunately, I was one of the four selected. So immediately after my exam, I started work with this professor, Howard Schuman.

McFarlane So that explains your affiliation with the university.

Alauddin Right. I was selected as a research assistant and supervisor. Four of us. So that again brought me in contact with a professor of an American university. And this work took me to industries, because you know, I had to interview people who had come to industrial work from rural settings. Because the subject of the study was to assess how cultural change was taking place, from rural to urban settings, from rural to urbanization.

McFarlane Had you thought about this before?

Alauddin Never, because I didn't think that I would get such a job in a research project. So we started interviewing people in the urban setting, in an industrial setting, and tracing from where these industrial workers were coming. So there are two phases of interview: one phase was in the industrial area, in the factory where the worker was working, and secondly, in the area where this worker was coming [from].

McFarlane Oh, okay.

Alauddin So if one worker was coming from X rural area, we would go back to that X rural area and select people from that area and interview [them]—

McFarlane Interesting.

Alauddin —and compare. Now I know that that's what the project director did, because I didn't have the whole gamut of the subject at that time. Now I realize that they compared what we learned from rural settings—what the rural setting says about people, about culture, about norms, about values—to what the industrial setting says, people of the same background in a factory setting. Because he has been exposed to factory, exposed to urban culture, exposed to urban norm, so that's how the change was captured. It was very interesting and I enjoyed that work.

McFarlane And that lasted for how—let me just get the years right. You get your master's degree in '63?

Alauddin Sixty-three. I got my B.A. in '60. I got admitted in '61. So '61, '62, '63—

McFarlane And then—

Alauddin I graduated in '63 in my master's. And then I worked for this sociocultural research project for a year, and then, in the meantime, when I was working on the research project, I applied for a job in the government, gave an interview, and I was selected for a government job. And after a year of work with this research project, I entered the government job with the ministry of social welfare.

McFarlane So with social welfare, what did you do in that capacity?

Alauddin I worked there from '64 to mid-'66. The ministry of social welfare has an urban community development program. So I was posted in a town near Dhaka, called Narayanganj. This project had to do with organizing women. We used to provide skill training to the women—mostly sewing, knitting, literacy programs, recreation programs for the women. We also had run a

school for children, especially in the afternoon. We ran—

McFarlane Why afternoon?

Alauddin Because the young boys used to work during the hours before the afternoon school. During the day we ran a typewriting class, short-hand class, carpentry class for those who were interested in learning carpentry. So it was all work training—knitting, weaving for women—so that they can augment their income.

McFarlane Now, the carpentry isn't for women.

Alauddin No, no, carpentry is not for women. So we ran all of those activities. I had female workers and male workers: males to work with the males, females to work with the females. And we used to organize educational activities, sports activities, so that the community [could] get together and work for the welfare of the community. I worked there, again, for about a year. And then I was transferred to a training institute. The training had to do with training the local union Parisad.

I will explain it to you. This training institute was a local government training institute. So in this training institute, there is a system called union Parisad. It's like county in your country. So they have a county government. You have a chairman and then members. In this training institute, the chairman, members came for training on various development activities that they would conduct in their own areas. So I was selected as one of the trainers from social welfare. My goal was to train them in social welfare activities. Because of my academic background and my good work in community development, I was selected from the ministry and was seconded

to a local government ministry. So I went there as an instructor. I worked there for about six months. Then again, I was brought to social welfare. And this time I was given charge of a division. And this job had to do with giving small grants to NGOs, to PBOs [public benefit organization], social welfare organizations. So I was responsible for a division. I think I worked there for about six months and then I came to Dhaka University to teach.

McFarlane That's pretty fast mobility, isn't it? (laughs)

Alauddin It is quite a fast mobility, because I started my government job I think in April '64, and then moved to university in August 1966. So I worked with the government for a little more than two years.

McFarlane Did you not want to stay with the government?

Alauddin I didn't want to stay with the government. I didn't. Oh, another thing happened—I should say that to you. When I was at the government, I sat for a public service exam. There are two systems of public service. One was provincial service, another was central service—central meaning the whole of Pakistan and provincial was sort of East Pakistan.

McFarlane Oh, that's interesting.

Alauddin So I sat for provincial service exam, and I was qualified. And when I joined the university, I came to know that I was qualified, because it takes a long time. But I decided not to join the government.

McFarlane Why not?

Alauddin Because I'd heard that I would not enjoy working with the government, because in government there is less flexibility, more rigidity. And I felt within myself that I would do well as a teacher. I would enjoy doing a teaching job,

doing a research job, and I considered a university job as more prestigious, more honorable, and I would be able to contribute more in human resource development. And thereby I would reach more than what I am.

McFarlane Is this your personal opinion? Is it a cultural perception, that the university is more prestigious than the government?

Alauddin In general, I would say that university teachers are well regarded, well respected. The civil service is also equally important because civil service generates a lot of power. In their position, they have a lot more power. They can influence things, they can maneuver things, they can generate benefit for themselves, for family, they can give favors. In that sense, they are more influential. They are more valuable in terms of [becoming a] son-in-law.

McFarlane Explain that to me.

Alauddin In early days, civil service was considered to be a prime category of job. Because if you are in power, if you are a CSP, Central Superior Service of Pakistan, or EPCS, East Pakistan Civil Service category, you are regarded as a worthy son in-law.

McFarlane Ah! So you were kind of throwing that out.

Alauddin Yeah.

McFarlane I'm just wondering: is university as stable an employment as civil service?

Alauddin No. Civil service is equally stable. But a civil service job is important to the people because they think in [terms of] power. They are closer to politics and they are in the helms of affairs. Their position can influence in many ways. For example, if you are a deputy commissioner, a head of a district, you are in command of so many people, you are in command of so many institutions

within the district, you are a coordinating officer. So in that sense, you are more powerful. But if I, as a teacher, if I go to the deputy commissioner, I am regarded. I get respect. They have the power, and teachers have the respect.

McFarlane Because of their knowledge?

Alauddin Because of their knowledge.

McFarlane Now, were you married by the time you made this decision to—?

Alauddin No, I was not married.

McFarlane So you were giving up the—(laughter)

Alauddin Yeah, of course.

McFarlane So you went back and you became a faculty member.

Alauddin I became a faculty member.

McFarlane Did you like it as much as you thought you would?

Alauddin I think I enjoyed my teaching, and so I think I have the opportunity of telling you that when I came to Pathfinder job, in fact, I did more teaching than I taught at the university.

McFarlane So in a sense, that helped to prepare you?

Alauddin Indeed, it did.

McFarlane So you go to the university from '66—

Alauddin Sixty-six.

McFarlane And you're there until when?

Alauddin I was there until '84.

McFarlane With a little break?

Alauddin With a break when I met you at Michigan.

McFarlane Dhaka University wasn't a very good place to be in 1971, was it?

Alauddin How do you mean?

McFarlane With the Pakistani—

Alauddin No, it was before '71. I started in '66.

McFarlane Okay, '66.

Alauddin It was a good place because we considered that Dhaka University, in many key ways, played a very important role in making the country independent.

McFarlane Tell me about that. This is really important.

Alauddin Dhaka University, historically, played a key role in social change, in political change. The students, in fact, are the forerunners in thinking about the politics of the country, economy of the country, social change of the country. So the students were the ones who were talking about disparity between East Pakistan and West Pakistan: what resources we have, what resources they have, and why we are lagging behind. Why we are fewer in number in military. Why we are fewer in number in civil administration. Why we are lower in many government institutions. Why our growth rate is not the same as West Pakistan.

McFarlane Meaning economic growth rate?

Alauddin Yeah, meaning economic growth rate. We produce jute so much, and earn so much, so [with the] foreign exchange from jute, why are we not investing that foreign exchange earned in East Pakistan? Why they are spending so much of money, taking resources from East Pakistan to West Pakistan and why there is so much disparity? These issues were sort of intellectually brought to the limelight by the intellectuals, but the students took it to the

general population.

McFarlane And the students are kind of the brain trust of the country.

Alauddin Yeah.

McFarlane They all have to take a rigorous exam to get in there?

Alauddin Yeah. (doorbell rings; pause in recording)

McFarlane [You were speaking about your] time as a faculty member.

Alauddin Right.

McFarlane And did you like it as much as you thought you would?

Alauddin I thoroughly enjoyed my teaching. As I was telling you that my contact with good teachers and my education at the school of social work at Dhaka University, I think, prepared me well to teach the students. And I enjoyed teaching, and also enjoyed the research work that I was at the same time doing.

McFarlane What were you doing in research?

Alauddin In terms of research, I was involved in an interesting subject, let's say. I was involved in surveying the beggar population in Dhaka City. That was one of the initial studies that the Institute of Social Welfare did. We interviewed the beggars who were begging on the street. We tried to understand what their physical conditions were, why they're begging, how much their income is, what kind of family they have, where they live in Dhaka City, et cetera. And these are special groups of people who came from rural areas and started making their living in Dhaka City because of their many physical disabilities, mostly physical disabilities. So that's one study that we started.

McFarlane Was that hard to do? Was that emotionally difficult?

Alauddin It was not emotionally difficult, but it was difficult in terms of generating information from them—

Tape 1 ends; tape 2, side 1, begins.

Okay. That was one interesting study that we started with, and there were many student projects that I was involved in. I don't remember all of them. Overall, I enjoyed the work at the university.

McFarlane Was anybody talking about population growth?

Alauddin Oh, about population growth. In 1964, I guess—no, it was in 1967, I think, '67 or late '66—there was the conference organized by Family Planning Association, and I attended that conference. That conference really was the first exposure to population issues in a wider context. The reason I say in a wider context is that in social work curricula, we had family planning and public health as one of the courses. I did not teach that course, but I was aware that the social work program was offering that subject. After I began teaching at the institute, I was encouraged to take a different route by one of my teachers. That different route was labor welfare, labor management. One of the courses that we offered as a special subject was labor welfare. So I started teaching that course, but I didn't have enough preparatory background. Nor were there enough materials, you know, to read and teach the class. So what I did was, at that time, there was a course offered by Management Development Institute [and] I enrolled myself in the evening course.

McFarlane Was that a part of the university?

Alauddin It was not a part of the university, it was a part of the government. It was a

government institute, and they offered short-term courses for the labor leaders, for the labor managers, and also a diploma program for those who were interested in taking that course. I enrolled myself in that program and got a diploma in personnel management. So that was one foundation course that I took for teaching labor welfare at the university in the social work institute. And in that labor management program, there was also a short-term course on population issues.

McFarlane Interesting.

Alauddin That was also, I think, my exposure to the population issues in an academic setting.

McFarlane So even at that point, at least somebody in the government was talking about it.

Alauddin In fact, I think it was one of the professors who was teaching labor psychology, in one of his classes brought [up] the issue of population, too. Really, one of the reasons of labor unrest [is] because you have more labor than jobs available in the industrial sector. So that was the context that population was brought in.

McFarlane So you're at the university until when?

Alauddin I began in May '66. Oh, I should back up a little bit. Another exposure to the population issue is—no, it was later, I'll come back to that issue later. I began in '66. Then I continued with the university until August of '73. In August '73, I left the university for the University of Michigan.

McFarlane How did that happen?

Alauddin Okay, let me tell you. I need to back up a little bit. In 1971 there was war of

liberation.

McFarlane In Pakistan.

Alauddin As I was telling you, Dhaka University students were in the forefront of this liberation work. And the issue was, largely, disparity between East Pakistan and West Pakistan. And we were the majority, in terms of population. But West Pakistan enjoyed all the benefits, in terms of development for the country, in terms of economic growth of the country, in terms of employment. On all indicators, West Pakistan was enjoying more benefits than East Pakistan, even though we were the majority. Jute was one of our major export earners. Despite that, we were in the deprivation. Students were taking this agenda to the people [to] mobilize the country towards liberation.

McFarlane Were you involved in that?

Alauddin I was involved with the faculty as a teacher. There were many small committees formed—finance committee, fund committee, fund generation committee. I was involved in the fund generation committee. In '71, the revolutionary war started. And the war was intensified in December. Many students, many faculty members left Dhaka City. I was wishing that I would leave, but I was married at that time. In fact, I was married in January '71. Yeah, in '71, when the war broke. Immediately after liberation, there was a United Nations program in the country. It used to be called UNROD, the United Nations Relief Operation in Dhaka. And there was even an advisor: he was a professor at Brandeis University School of Social Work, Dr. David French. He came to Dhaka as the UN advisor. His office was, in fact, in the college of social work. And I came in contact with him. My wife came in

contact with him. He was trying to put together a planning document for population.

McFarlane For the UN?

Alauddin For the Bangladesh government. Because he was interested in social development, and he saw population as one of the important agendas. So he put together a group of people to generate background papers. And I and my wife were among those team members who were involved in preparing background papers. That's how I came in contact with David French and his wife. He was instrumental in getting a fellowship for me at the University of Michigan. The University of Michigan [had] just opened up a giant program in social work and population in the School of Public Health. And David French is an alumnus of the University of Michigan, and he knew faculty members. He knew that there was a joint program developed between social work and the school of public health. So he encouraged me to apply for admission. And I applied and was taken in as a student. So that's how I ended up getting a scholarship from the school of social work for study of MSW, specializing in public health and population. So that's how I met you and other alumni.

McFarlane What did you have in mind? I mean, what did David French have in mind for you?

Alauddin The plan was that I would come back to the institute and start teaching a population and family planning course, because there was no trained teacher in that area. That was the plan that David French had in mind. Henry Meyer, who was the director of that program, had in mind that after I get this

master's training in population and social work, I will go back and teach at Dhaka University. Henry Meyer, who was the director of the program, came to Dhaka and visited our department. He wanted me to come back immediately after my master's, but I explored—with his knowledge, with his consent—I explored the possibility of getting in the Ph.D. program. I was planning to continue, but I was not sure whether Henry Meyer would endorse my continuation in the Ph.D. program.

Before I completed the master's, he happened to come to Dhaka and had meetings with my colleagues. And perhaps he assessed whether my continuation in the Ph.D. program would be beneficial to Dhaka University or not. And perhaps he had an idea that having a Ph.D. would place me, academically, better in this setting and whether my role would be more effective after having a Ph.D. So his assessment was favorable and after he went back to Michigan and I had a meeting with him, he said that I would be ideal. "I would endorse your application for the PhD program and I would support it."

McFarlane So initially when you went to Michigan, you were going for another master's degree in social work—

Alauddin Right.

McFarlane But then you made the decision to stay on?

Alauddin Right, then I made the decision. In fact, in academia, the Ph.D. degree is an asset in the professional opinion, so I was happy that I was considered favorably and I was taken in as a Ph.D. student. And that helped me professionally, indeed. Of course, I had to get my family—three children, my

wife. Again, my wife, when she came a year later, she had a political science degree from Durham in North Carolina. So that helped her getting an admission in the Institute of Public Policy at Rackham. So she came as a student of public policy. She had a teaching waiver and I had a small scholarship from the department of population planning, so I had to work, my wife had to work and do our Ph.D. program.

McFarlane It was really different there?

Alauddin It was different, yeah.

McFarlane How did you find it?

Alauddin How did I find the program?

McFarlane Or culturally, going to Ann Arbor, Michigan?

Alauddin You know, initially, for my master's program I had quite a good scholarship, so I had saved some money, and also we had some savings back home. So when my wife came, she brought some dollars out of our savings, brought some money with her, so initially, we had no problem in settling ourselves, in terms of our own need and putting the children in school. And also our youngest one was, at that time, two years old, and we had to organize babysitters and all that. So the first year was okay. And then after a year, we settled with new friends. I had a very supportive advisor, Tim Johnson—very nice man. He helped me explore jobs at the university, and so I had a part-time job in the university library. The first job I had was with the medical school library.

So that helped, and later on when I had a car I had a job with the school of management—business school. The business school organizes short-term

training courses for the business educators, so I got a job with that school as materials manager. So the hours that I requested were in the evening. That was quite appropriate for me because I could spend time in the evening. My job involved putting together materials for business educators. The teacher would give me a list of articles, so I went to different libraries, found the journals, photocopied those articles and put them in binders (laughs) and take them to classes. Attending class—easel board, paper, pencil, you know, even what you call chewing gum and all that—and my job was done. So I would go and pass those out and then bring back to the business school. So that was my job.

McFarlane So it didn't really tax your intellect.

Alauddin No. In fact, when I searched those articles, sometimes I came across some of the articles that were relevant for my class, you know. So it was very, very nice. And also people are very nice. The business school really—they were businesslike but they were very nice. And it helped me, you know, what—

McFarlane So you got a master's in social work in '74?

Alauddin In '74.

McFarlane Was that repetitious of what you had here?

Alauddin The population courses that I took were new, so it was not repetitious. I took mostly policy-related courses, so I didn't take the social work techniques and tools type of courses that I took in Dhaka. So the policy courses, the management courses that I took, were not repetitious.

McFarlane And then you went and got a Ph.D. degree in population planning?

Alauddin Yeah.

McFarlane And Tim Johnson was your advisor?

Alauddin Yeah, he was my advisor.

McFarlane Throughout the Ph.D.?

Alauddin Yes. As a student, you know, you have an academic advisor, and then my Ph.D. dissertation chair was Dr. [Yuzuru] Takeshita. Yes, Tim Johnson was my academic advisor also.

McFarlane Tell me about your dissertation research.

Alauddin That was interesting, I should say. I took Ev Roger's course and also of course, you know, [Snehendu] Kar's seminar. Initially I thought that I would work on Venezuela data with Kar, who had a project in Venezuela. So I started working in Kar's project and started exploring what kind of dissertation topic I would have. And given the fact that I would be using Dr. Kar's data, I thought husband-wife communication would be an appropriate topic, because Kar is also interested in communication. So I started on that premise, that I would do my dissertation on husband-wife communication. In the process, I came across the WFS, World Fertility Survey, data sets. Not just one—Bangladesh was one of them. And there were other countries [but] I knew in particular about the Bangladesh one—that's the country I am from and I was interested in that data set. And Nik [Nurul Islam Khan], he was in contact with World Bank at that time and he was interested in using the Bangladesh fertility survey data. And his interest was analyzing variances in performance between districts. Bangladesh had at that time twenty-four, twenty-two, or twenty-one districts, and we had district-level data as well as community-level data.

McFarlane Was this from the World Fertility Survey?

Alauddin World Fertility Survey. So Nik was exploring the possibility of getting some funds for that analysis, and in fact, offered me whether I would be interested in analyzing community-level data, because we had community-level data as well as individual-level data. So that got me interested in considering the idea of utilizing Bangladesh fertility survey data and working with Yuzuru. So those two factors—[but then there was] the Kar factor, the politics of the department.

McFarlane What was going on?

Alauddin We already knew that Dr. Kar is heavily involved in departmental politics. And I didn't feel good about getting into that fold. If I start working with Dr. Kar, I would be boxed into that, practically [speaking]. So I didn't want to get into that issue.

McFarlane You could tell what was going on?

Alauddin There was a clear division between George Simmon's group and Kar's group. And Leslie Corsa was in between. I didn't want to categorize myself in either one. So I thought that politically, it would be good, and also it would be good for me in terms of using Bangladesh data, because I didn't have any intention of staying [in the U.S.]. I would be coming back [to Bangladesh].

McFarlane You were always planning to come back?

Alauddin I always planned to come back, so I thought it would be good for me to use Bangladesh data and have good sense about what was in it. And I will go back to Yuzuru. And also Nik's idea of generating funds for the analysis would be an advantage for me. So I was using Bangladesh data and the

question ensued whether he [Yuzuru] considered me as his student, and becoming my chair. And he agreed, and I was pretty happy. So that's how I started working on WFS data. In the process, Nik sort of drifted off and funding for the analysis didn't come through. And I was hoping that I would get some funding so I would get some expenses covered for the WFS analysis. But because that didn't come through, I had to get data set myself. So that gave me an additional burden. Through Professor Takeshita, I got the clearance from WFS, World Fertility Survey, to use Bangladesh data, but I had to come physically to Bangladesh to get the data set—I didn't get the data set from WFS. So I came to Bangladesh and got a copy of the data set.

McFarlane Would it have been a tape at that time?

Alauddin It was a long (laughs) story. That's another story. The data set was owned by statistical division of the government of Bangladesh, the planning commission. The head of the department, the secretary at that time, was a Ph.D. also. He asked me to give the number of tables that I would prepare.

McFarlane Oh, like you would know at this point?

Alauddin That put me in a difficult position. I didn't know how many tables I would make, you know, because I would start with the same old descriptive table and then get into multivariate analysis. So I told him that I didn't have any idea how many tables I'd need, and what would be those tables. I can simply tell you at this point in time that I would like to analyze the level of contribution of family planning vis-à-vis development factors. At the community level we have some of the variables, like availability of electricity, availability of roads. Those are some of the development variables that I'd

consider, and of course family planning—

Tape 2, side 1, ends; side 2 begins.

So I told this secretary that my dissertation would require more than two tables. At this point in time, I cannot tell you in advance how many tables I would need and what will be the character of the table, whether they'd be by variance or simple distribution.

McFarlane Why did he want to know? Were they going to run the tables for you or were they giving you the tape?

Alauddin Well, I didn't know. I think his thought was that he would run those tables and give me those tables. I think maybe that was his thought. Again, as I was telling you, you need rope in many cases in developing countries.

McFarlane Well, explain that, please. You need connections: is that—

Alauddin Yeah, you need connections.

McFarlane And you didn't have them?

Alauddin I had to use a connection. This gentleman was the secretary of the ministry and I had at that time a secretary who was my brother-in-law. So I had a connection through my wife—in-law's connection. So I told my brother-in-law that this is what the secretary is saying, but that would not help me in writing my dissertation. So what I need is a complete set of data so that I can build up my analysis from simple description to the more particular about the relationship of various components of the indicators that I analyze. And I cannot tell at this point in time how many tables I would need and what would those variables be. So he helped me in getting the full data set, and I [had to] vouch in writing that I will not write or I will not share this data set

with anybody else. I would use strictly for the purpose of my analysis for dissertation, and I will not publish anything beyond my dissertation without the expressed permission of the government. So he telephoned him and later on he gave me a data set.

McFarlane Did you have to sign that you wouldn't—

Alauddin I think you'd say that I received a copy of the data set for my dissertation. I didn't have to say anything beyond that. So again, a connection helps.

McFarlane But that's something you hadn't had earlier on?

Alauddin Well, I didn't have—again there are several connections needed because—again at the institute, when I applied for available scholarship at the University of Michigan, my department chair raised the question about whether I got the scholarship through university or I got the scholarship directly. So I got this scholarship directly from the University of Michigan. I didn't go through the university system. So he raised the question again, how come you didn't apply through us. This scholarship is not through us, so do you not get study leave.

McFarlane Wow.

Alauddin That was another stumbling block. Again, I had to use my connection.

McFarlane Now, did this have anything to do with your religious background?

Alauddin No, nothing, nothing, just the system.

McFarlane Just the power structure.

Alauddin Just the power structure. We had not gone through him, so again, I had to go to the vice chancellor, through a connection, and say, "This is a scholarship that I got as a faculty member of Dhaka University and I will come back to

Dhaka University. There is no single cost to Dhaka University. Dhaka University should be happy that I got a scholarship and that I'll come back to this university for the university's benefit." The vice chancellor was generous enough and he said, "Okay, go ahead." He granted the leave. So I—

McFarlane So you had connections through him?

Alauddin Well, I had to go to him for the connection. So connection is important. I think connection plays everywhere. In some places—

McFarlane Particularly in universities—

Alauddin Well, particularly in developing countries. In developed countries also a connection helps, but I think it's more important, more needed here.

McFarlane You think it's more family oriented?

Alauddin I think it's more system oriented, I think because systems are more restrictive, rather than facilitating.

McFarlane Do you think it's more of an elite structure?

Alauddin It is, I think. In political terms it is more of an elite structure. You want to hold back all of your power and you want to exercise it. You want to demonstrate that you are favoring—

McFarlane It's patronage.

Alauddin Patronage, you know.

McFarlane You're already a master's graduate at Dhaka University at this time, but because you're not from a well-connected family—that's what you needed to make things work?

Alauddin Yes.

McFarlane Okay. I just wanted to make sure I was understanding.

Alauddin Well, even if I was [from a] well-connected family, maybe that question would have been raised even then, that question had been raised anyway. But in my case, if I had good connections I could remove the problem, but someone who had no connection would have been stopped. So you need to lever the connection to remove bottlenecks. And these bottlenecks or constraints should not be there. Because of the paternalistic attitude, because of this attitude of patronage, this system creates block for you, rather than facilitating.

McFarlane And in the end, Dhaka University would have been hurt—

Alauddin In the end, Dhaka University would have been hurt.

McFarlane —because you wouldn't have had a Ph.D.

Alauddin Right. And in the end, the system nearly blocks the progress, hinders the development rather than promotes the development. And I had to go through that process.

McFarlane And you had to come back here. Did you physically take the data tape back to Michigan?

Alauddin Physically took the data set to Michigan University and started working on it, you know, with those cards.

McFarlane You had to go through security with it.

Alauddin I didn't exactly remember. Maybe I was asked what was in it because it was a round box. I could open it and show it that it was a data set. And at that time, the world was not that intense about the security.

McFarlane So you went back and worked with Takeshita?

Alauddin I went back and worked with Takeshita, and in terms of analysis, my primary,

my major help was Dr. Frank Andrews. He helped me in how I should proceed about analyzing the data, because he was helpful in building the block for the analysis, building the steps from simple, descriptive analysis to bivariate analysis and move to multiple classification analysis, multiple variance analysis. So he was very, very helpful. And at times when I would have a problem in understanding and integrating the data, I would go to him and ask him how would I translate this in terms of translating the variance, really translate them beyond the statistics.

McFarlane Um-hm. [Asking him,] “What does this mean?”

Alauddin What does it mean. And he was very helpful. And Dr. Takeshita, I remember I would give him the analysis of the chapter, and in the morning he would come back and say, “Alauddin, here is your chapter with my comments. I worked on it until four o’clock in the morning.” And that would make me so happy, and he would say, “Well, this is the work I get as a chairman. You kept me awake until four o’clock.” You know, he would smile and say that.

McFarlane So he was a big support.

Alauddin He was a big support, and I really enjoyed working with him and with Frank Andrews. Frank is in heaven and let Allah take good care of him.

McFarlane Who else was on your committee?

Alauddin Frank Andrews, Tim Johnson, Takeshita—

McFarlane That’s a wonderful. And what did you learn?

Alauddin You mean about the topic itself?

McFarlane Yeah.

Alauddin You know, there was a big debate in Bucharest—

McFarlane In '74. Were you there?

Alauddin No, I was not there at the conference but I was at Michigan, and it was, at that time, either development or [the] Pill. The argument was that Pill is both a political tool and a development tool. So the idea of analyzing whether development is important, or family planning is important, or both work simultaneously—the idea of the dissertation came from the World Fertility Survey. You know, population or development. Development is the best Pill, was the feeling at that time. The data set that I had sort of had problems, because the data was very skewed, skewedly distributed. At that time, family planning use was only 14, 15 percent.

McFarlane Wow.

Alauddin So it was very, very skewed. And also the data we had on development again was skewedly distributed. We had indicators on roads available, on electricity available, on number of field workers available, on schools available. So, because it was early stage of development, early stage of family planning, you know, the data was skewedly distributed. I could comfortably analyze [the] world knowledge of family planning—

McFarlane That wasn't as skewed?

Alauddin That wasn't as skewed as users of family planning. The analysis showed that in a village where you have roads connected, family planning workers could go easily. Knowledge of family planning is higher. So you had both effects—

McFarlane Working together?

Alauddin Working together. Family planning, welfare, and roads leading to the easy access for communication had better effect. You had more knowledge in a

village where frequency of contact by a field worker was more. And frequency of contact was facilitated by roads. So you had that combined effect, which still holds even now. In Bangladesh we find geographic variations in terms of ease of family planning. Knowledge is no [longer a] variant—maybe because of radio, television, and world communication—but use [of family planning methods] varies. We have six divisions now in the country. We call [them] divisions. Chittagong division has the lowest family planning use. Rajshahi has the highest. The second highest is Khulna. Fertility also, TFR [total fertility rate], that is by division. Chittagong division has the highest TFR. Rajshahi has the lowest. So there is correspondence between family planning use and fertility. Rajshahi in terms of communication is better. In terms of geographic environment, it is a plain. Chittagong is kind of hilly.

McFarlane

So it's harder to get to?

Alauddin

A field worker finds it difficult to access all the households. In Rajshahi, you can access households easily, [by] bicycle, rickshaw, walking even. [In] Rajshahi women are more mobile. Women can freely go to family planning clinics. Or family planning workers can go easily to them and talk to them. And women's literacy is also higher there, compared to Chittagong. Rajshahi is economically not better off, but culturally better off. Compared to Rajshahi, Chittagong would have more per capita income, but culturally [Rajshahi] is more cultivated. So development has an impact. It's a combined impact with family planning. The analysis that I found in WFS data showed that development and family planning both had impact on knowledge and

use. The same holds even today.

McFarlane Did it surprise you? Is that what you expected?

Alauddin It didn't surprise me. It didn't surprise me. I expected that result and it didn't surprise me. But later on, when I started working in the field, I tended to think that making family planning available has also a component of demand creation.

McFarlane Of what?

Alauddin Demand creation.

McFarlane Oh, okay.

Alauddin I mean, the theory that supply side has only supply impact—I think it could also have demand impact.

McFarlane Explain that. Just help me make the connection.

Alauddin What happens is, through supply you recruit users. And supply has several dimensions. One is supply of contraceptives. Another component of supply side is education. You inform people, you educate people, [and] although you no longer use the word, [you] motivate people. Motivation has a loaded meaning in terms of human rights, in terms of freedom of choice. When we began family planning, the earliest concept was IEM—Information, Education, Motivation. We had IEM unit in family planning directorate. That, later on, became IEC—Information, Education, and Communication. You see the evolution. Anyway, that's a side comment.

So you have supply of contraceptives, you have education, information, motivation—at two levels, at the community level, field level, and also individual level. Field workers who go individually to the couple, to the wife

or to the husband and talk benefits of family planning, spacing births, delaying births. So that's supply side. So when supply side succeeds in having someone use family planning, you have a converter. You have a user. This user becomes a speaker in promoting family planning. So she recruits another one—

McFarlane Who demands the service.

Alauddin That person is demanding services. That person is converting another user. So you add to the demand. And when one becomes a user, then another person asks you, What is your experience? [and you say] Oh, I am a user, I'm fine, I'm doing okay. So you snowball the user and then bring other users into your court, non-users into your court. And that's how you create additional demand on the supply.

McFarlane Okay, that's a good explanation, thanks.

Alauddin And that's how you change the old behavior and create a new behavior. And new behavior, over time, by many, creates a lot.

McFarlane Um-hm.

Alauddin So family planning supply side had created that kind of cyclic events into the society, and even brought those into the fold of family planning who are not, in [an] ordinary sense, innovators. Innovators are educated, employed, exposed. So by family planning supply side, what Bangladesh has done is to reach out to illiterate, to landless, to unemployed, and that's how you see their variance. [There is] very little difference in contraceptive use by poor people, by the illiterate. So although I am a worker of development, at the same time I am convinced that family planning supply side has also impact.

Now what is happening [is that] development is needed to back up the secondary values created by family planning—secondary values meaning we have been telling families that if you have small families, you will be economically better off. You will be better off in terms of your health. Your second generation, the children, would be better off in terms of education, in terms of food, in terms of nutrition, in terms of housing, in terms of employment. These I call secondary values of family planning. You need to back up the extensive development effort to attend to those aspirations that family planning advocates bring along, and thereby sustain the interest for family planning, sustain the interest for reproductive health, and make the aspirations of the people for improving the quality of life. And unless you do that the effect of family planning remains only partial. It does not fulfill the promise that family planning advocates, reproductive health advocates, promote to the population.

McFarlane So are you arguing for more integrated programs?

Alauddin More integrated programs, more simultaneous programs. We need an aggressive reproductive health program. At the same time, we need aggressive development programs.

McFarlane Hand in hand.

Alauddin Hand in hand. And also the third dimension—which is surfacing more and more—is the question of speedy equity, fast equity, making up soon, faster, the gap that we have between the poor and the rich.

McFarlane How do you do that?

Alauddin It's a difficult question. How do you narrow the gap? I guess the answer is

changing our mindset first, changing the mindset in terms of changing our value system, both internationally and nationally. Are we finished on this?

McFarlane No, but we're getting close.

Alauddin Okay, I think this will need a little bit more time.

McFarlane Well, I'll pick this up at the end, too, but this is a tall order.

Alauddin This is a tall order. I think there is a mindset currently existing both internationally and nationally—the fact that we are in the mode of patronage [rather than] the concept of equal rights, equal privilege. We are more in the mode of regulation than facilitation. There's things that have to change first, both nationally and internationally. I'll come back to this, elaborate more on this. (pause in recording)

I got a scholarship from the University of Michigan, with my own initiative, with the help and support of the friend, Dr. David French, who thought that I had potential. I can be a contributing individual to the development of a society. A part of the world. That should have been taken as a positive thing by my seniors, by my boss.

Tape 2 ends, tape 3, side 1, begins.

What benefit is this regulation bringing to the university? The faculty member won't have to go to the university system, apply to the vice chancellor or the department chair for admission to another university, for a scholarship, for another residency. You know, I have brought that to the university. The university should be happy that I brought a scholarship from another university. This scholarship is for development of faculty, not an assault to the values of culture and the society. This is not something

contrary to what is wanted, contrary to what is desirable, you know? So this rule, if this is in fact a rule, then this rule is not helping, but hurting. This rule is a patronage rule, not an equity rule, not a helping rule. So this kind of constraint—another example, you know, is this: give me a set of district tables that you will leave from your previous team. You know, this was coming from a very superior person.

McFarlane Superior in the hierarchy.

Alauddin Superior in the hierarchy And here you have a data set generated by a world community, and we are a part of it. And this is a data set for generating knowledge, [for] unfolding [the] thinking faculty of the scientist. Here I am interested in getting a data set. This is not a bomb, you know. (laughter)

McFarlane And it's not a new car for you.

Alauddin This is not a new car for me, you know. This is a resolved stand, and it will help me develop professionally. Even if I don't come back to the country, even if I serve the international community, I'll do international research. But I'm planning to come to the country, work in the country, be a humble worker and servant of the country, and here I face a constraint. And I need to find out someone who has the stream of power, or can influence this person, to [turn] a negative decision to a positive one. Why do I have to go through this kind of heartache? I'm talking about these kinds of issue, while I am talking about equity and opportunity. So you know, there's an opportunity, career opportunity for me. Don't create borders, you know, hard obstacles. This is not an obstacle race.

McFarlane Right.

Alauddin If you want to create an obstacle race, create it in the sports field, not in real life. (laughs) (pause in recording)

We promise a better life, we promise better health for ourselves and for our children. And we do not completely match our policy with the promise. It happens nationally and also it happens internationally. Nationally we have not been able to provide development services to all of our people. For example, we have recently improved our enrollment for children in primary school and also improved enrollment for girls in primary school. The government has introduced a scholarship for primary school children and their families. Money goes to the family [and] they send their children to school.

McFarlane Part of the money goes to the family, not to support schools.

Alauddin To the family, yeah. Not to support the school, [but rather] to support the family that sends the girls and boys to the school. This helps. [Returning to] the point that I was making, that we had to speed up the process of the gap between the rich and the poor, this is an example of where the government is making an attempt to create an opportunity for the poor families to send their children to school. And this is a good step toward the right direction.

McFarlane But it takes enormous amounts of resources.

Alauddin It does, it certainly does. But it's a promise that we made to our citizens, that we would make opportunities equally available to all citizens of the country. And also this is a promise, a commitment that we made internationally, that we will create opportunities for choice. So if you have your fair intentions, and if you give it a try, a thing is possible to make things happen.

Internationally, even within the reproductive health problems, there are contradictory policies. Like, we say that we work for improvement of maternal health, for example. Within family planning, we can give contraceptives, but if there are any side effects, [we] you can pay for the physician's fee, but you cannot pay for medicine.

McFarlane Is this a certain type of aid, or—

Alauddin U.S. assistance doesn't allow buying medicine for the patient if the medicine is not of U.S. make.

McFarlane And it's not a contraceptive?

Alauddin If it is not a contraceptive, right.

McFarlane So it wouldn't permit medicine for vaginal infections—

Alauddin Would not.

McFarlane Okay. That's expensive.

Alauddin Would not, would not. If you are going to a physician, you can pay the physician's fee, but you cannot pay for the medicine that would be required for treating your vaginal infection or your bacterial infection.

McFarlane But that's U.S. policy.

Alauddin That's U.S. policy. So even in health, you are not making things easy for people. You are not promoting health, although we are saying this is for good health. And another example is that maternal health is affected by the nutritional level of the mother, also. U.S. policy is that you cannot buy an iron tablet with U.S. money for the health of the mother to improve her iron deficiency. So that's another example that within health, within international policy, there is a constraint, there is a restriction with regard to improving the

health of the women.

McFarlane And you've had the responsibility of trying to make several different types of aid work together, right?

Alauddin Yeah. That's right.

McFarlane I want to just get back to kind of going through your chronology a bit. You finished up at University of Michigan in 1979, got your commission.

Alauddin Right. May of '79, June of '79.

McFarlane Yeah, and you came back, which is what you always intended to do.

Alauddin I always wanted to come back, yeah.

McFarlane Because many don't come back, correct?

Alauddin Right. Many don't come back. And there was the opportunity for [me to remain in the U.S.], there was work available, but I did not take that opportunity. I wanted to come back and work on the ground here.

McFarlane What did you do when you got back here?

Alauddin I came back to the Dhaka University and taught until 1984, until October 1984, when I joined Pathfinder International.

McFarlane Was that a hard decision, to join them? I mean, from the university?

Alauddin It was not a hard decision. I wanted the opportunity of working on the ground in the field of population. The training I had inspired me to work with the people with non-government organizations, and I considered Pathfinder a job with an opportunity of working directly in the field. So I took this challenge. This was a challenging job.

McFarlane So was this a new job, or had somebody else had it?

Alauddin This was not a new job. Pathfinder has a long history of working in

Bangladesh. The first grant from Pathfinder Fund—at the time it was called the Pathfinder Fund—came to Bangladesh in early 1953 to the founding of the East Pakistan Family Planning Association. That was a very critical input that came into the country for family planning. So it was early, mid-'50s. At that time there was hardly any concept of family planning. So that investment was a critical investment for family planning.

Until the end of the revolutionary war, when East Pakistan became Bangladesh, there was no activity of Pathfinder funding in Bangladesh. After liberation, there was an international conference in 1972, and Pathfinder again supported the international conference. Of course, I didn't know at that time that support was coming [from the] Pathfinder Fund. I attended that conference, and I also presented a paper at that conference. So based on the recommendations of the international conference the first five-year plan of population planning was formulated. So that was another landmark intervention investment from Pathfinder Fund.

McFarlane

Was that a consortium that put that together, the government or—

Alauddin

The plan that was formulated was by the government. The government organized the international conference. And based on the recommendation that was generated at the conference, the plan was formulated. And government started really paying attention to family planning program.

Family planning was one of the agendas that was considered harmful for the country during Pakistani days. Rule by the majority and [the development of a] family planning program during Pakistani days was rigorously prevented in East Pakistan, unlike in West Pakistan. It was thought that West Pakistan

is trying to reduce in number, in terms of political consideration.

McFarlane Interesting.

Alauddin But immediately after liberation, government took up the issue of population growth seriously and started exploring possibility of what could be done in this field. So soon after liberation, a policy was formulated, and the government vigorously started implementing the program. In 1978, Pathfinder Fund set up its office in Dhaka. The field office was set up. And USAID sent funds from Washington. And since '81, the Dhaka office started giving grants to the NGOs. And six NGOs in particular were given grants by USAID, and these six NGOs were called cooperating agencies. One of them was Pathfinder. And when I began work in '84, the first country representative, who began the office, set up the office, and started the program, retired. In the interim, there was one senior program officer acting as country representative. And after I joined, she left the organization in a couple of months. And since then, I have been with Pathfinder. In 1991, Pathfinder Fund changed the name to Pathfinder International.

McFarlane Why?

Alauddin The reason was Pathfinder Fund really narrowly defined the mandate of the organization. Pathfinder Fund means someone who gives funds, you know, gives money, gives grants. But Pathfinder Fund also gives technical assistance. So the board of directors thought that the name should be expanded to include what we were doing. And also another consideration was that the scope of work is sort of international. So that's another consideration that name was changed to Pathfinder International.

McFarlane What were you hired to do initially?

Alauddin When I began, I did not really—when I reflect back, I did not really have the full depth of understanding of what this organization was doing at that time. And the projects that were at work at the time was community-based family planning distribution. It used to be called CBD, community-based distribution. And I started with that, and initially tried to understand what is the scope of Pathfinder activity in Bangladesh, and how the organization can influence the policy of the country and what additional work it could do. What are the flexibilities we know we have as an organization? What limits USAID puts on the use of their money, et cetera. So I tried to understand what was the whole length and breadth of the work.

McFarlane So and this is your first real contact with managing USAID money?

Alauddin It was, yeah. The one advantage of the cooperating agency, as I understand, and I think it holds true, [is] that you can initiate new activities consistent with the USAID policy and also with the government. When I began I found that the CBD projects had high levels of CPR—contraceptive prevalence rate was very high. And as a researcher, a fresh researcher, I found that that was highly, highly inflated.

In fact—I joined Pathfinder in October '84—the following year, in January 1985, the U.S. ambassador wanted to visit one of our family planning projects. And I took him to one of our oldest sites—oldest meaning three or four years old—and the project manager was reporting a contraceptive use rate of more than 75 percent in the project area. And the ambassador looked at me and said, “This sounds high, isn’t it?” I told him that I’m new, I’m still

trying to understand what is happening. To me, also it seems that it is very high compared to what was happening in the rest of the country.

So after he came back I requested USAID if it would do a sort of rapid kind of mini-survey in that project area, and USAID agreed, and we conducted a survey and we found that the contraceptive use rate was only 36 percent. The problem was that the numerator was wrong. They were counting every time, almost every user, three or four times a year. You know, you have accepted the Pill. You have dropped out. You have switched to condom, so you see, you are counted twice. If you had gone to Pill from injectable, you are counted twice. So that's how numerator started inflating and denominator remains more or less static. So the first thing I did was correct this problem—that a user can be counted only once, not twice. And started [researching] families and trying to correct the numbers, so that we have reliable data, you know, we have valid estimates of contraceptives used among the population.

McFarlane Just to give me an idea of scope, do you know how many patients were being served, approximately, at that point by Pathfinder? Just a rough—

Alauddin I don't exactly remember, but in terms of dollars I can tell you. You know, it was about \$200,000 at that time. And I can find out how many clients we had served at that time, I can give you that figure.

McFarlane Okay, just to get an idea, in terms of how it developed during your tenure.

Alauddin You know, I should have remembered that, because I think that's important, and I'll give you a figure because that will link up with my future work.

McFarlane Did that make you popular in the field, that you corrected the error?

Alauddin I don't think it made me unpopular, but what I tried to do is tell them that having reliable data is more credible than unreliable data. And unreliable data would bring us more discredit than credit.

McFarlane So you were able to convey that?

Alauddin Yeah. I was able to convey that. And also I tried to teach district field managers—who are all women, all female—I taught them how to calculate CPR, contraceptive prevalence rate. And one of the problems was how CPR could be calculated. It's a simple calculation: number of women using family planning and number of women you're serving. And we try to—with the help of USAID and other cooperating agencies—we try to define what a family planning user is. We brought the concept called active user. An active user was one who was currently on any method, so [that] regardless of whatever number of methods you have used in a year, you are counted only once, and only on the method you are currently using or practicing. And traditional methods are not counted. So we define active user with the help of USAID. And all cooperating agencies agreed on that definition, and we started using the same definition among the USAID system. And we defined the currently married women as eligible couple—it used to be called ELCO. It is still called ELCO. So we shortened the definition of ELCO, we shortened the definition of active user, and we taught the field worker how to calculate CPR.

The field workers were assigned certain geographic areas. And the projects also have certain geographic areas. So what we did, we taught the field worker that you have 418 eligible couples in your area, you know, you

count how many are users. So they counted and calculated CPR for each one of them, and they compared notes, that I have a CPR of this, I have a CPR of this. So there was a competition among [them], because we wanted to increase the CPR. And we taught field workers to calculate the CPR so that each one of them can calculate and compare what is the CPR of Rohima vis-à-vis Rahela. And what was the CPR last month, and what is the CPR this month? So you get a tool—

Tape 3, side 1, ends; side 2 begins.

—for improving the efficiency of field worker, because, you know, this tool gives them a self-accountability of improving their own performance. They could tell by themselves whether they have done better than last month, whether one has done better than the other. So there is a competition, you know, set. And in the process, I also found, from our own data and from the national data that almost all family planning users were women or couples who were more than thirty years of age, elderly couples, and most having four or more children. So this lesson told us that if we are to achieve the two-child family then we have to pay attention to those who are younger and lower-parity couples. So that lesson opened up another key intervention for us.

McFarlane

Now what data told you that? Data from the field workers?

Alauddin

Data from the field workers, as well as from the data from the national surveys. By then we had three national surveys done, [in] '81, '83, '85, so three national surveys showed us that family planning users were mostly from the higher age group, and very few in the lower age group. So we

started the concept that we need to train our field workers to pay more attention to those who have fewer children. Give attention to those who have more children, but we will identify families who are younger and have two or less children so that we can contact them more, we can educate them more, we can inform them more, and increase contraceptive use among those younger populations. So our slogan was, pay more attention to young and low-parity couples.

Since we began that, another opportunity came in 1986. In fact, you know, we were trying from 1985 onward to establish a national population day. We had an international population day, but we were aspiring to have a national population day. In 1986, we prevailed upon President Ershad, and he declared January 2 as National Population Day in 1986.

McFarlane

How did you prevail on him?

Alauddin

Well, we NGOs organized ourselves and we went to him. We went to the ministry of health and family welfare and talked about it—that this is an important agenda and we should pay more attention nationally, and make it a social movement, so that family planning program becomes a visible program, a well-accepted program, and there is no taboo attached to it. I think 1986 was the year when President Ershad won the United Nations population award. So we could easily contact and establish a relationship with him and convey our message to him. He was inspired at the United Nations and we also convinced him that this is an important way of making population a national agenda. In 1987, I had contacted the ministry and proposed that we have a national reception for two-child families.

McFarlane How did that work?

Alauddin We proposed it, and the secretary asked me, “Why you want to do that?” So I explained to him that our national goal, our national policy, is to attain two-child family as early as possible. And if we are to achieve two-child family, we need to demonstrate to the entire country that two-child family is the modern family, two-child family is a desirable family, you know? The whole nation praises two-child family.

McFarlane Because you’re really breaking some social norms.

Alauddin Because you are breaking social norm. You are creating social norm. So if you are to create a social norm, break away from the old one and establish a new one, you need to make it visible to the country, as visible as possible. Family planning is not visible. It is private, it is secret. It is of the couple, then. If we are to make this visible in a socially desirable way, we tell the nation and the world a two-child family is the most important thing. Contain family size at two.

So we developed a proposal to organize a reception throughout the country and at the national level. And we requested the secretary that the president should come. The activity is Pathfinder through its NGOs, and also to the civil administration of the district. We will select two-child family, one couple from each of the sixty-four districts. And we will invite the nomination from the deputy commissioner. Deputy commissioner is the civil head, right? And we will give the criteria that the couple will have only two children, and the youngest child will be at least three years old. They will be family planning users. They will promise that they will have no more

children, or they have decided that they will have no more children. And they will be invited to Dhaka, all sixty-four [couples], and each one of them will get a certificate from the president. The president will hand out the certificate praising them that, you know, You are the modern couple: please go back to your own community and tell your friends, families, neighbors, that you are modern. You have met the president. The president wants that the two-child family should be the goal for all of us.

At the district level, also at the project level, also you organize similar reception. And national level reception began from '87. I continued supporting the ministry in this activity until '93. Consistently, every year, we invited two-child families to the capital. Either the president or the prime minister, President Ershad [or] Begum Khaleda Zia, the current prime minister, handed out certificates—the speaker of the Parliament, you know, we used all [of them].

Another thing we did on Population Day, we paraded the streets in the city. We had a national parade. National population day, it was a party and all that fanfare. And then we go to national auditorium and give the certificate that we give, and the two-child family representative will speak at the dais. And then lots of praise for them. So we did this activity until '93. In '92, I should add, we invited only two-daughter families. Those who have two daughters and don't want to have any more children, they were invited, sixty-four of them. And then in '91—I think '91, that year was the Decade of the Woman and the Child—in synchronizing with that, we invited sixty-four parents who had only two girls in order to demonstrate that you are also

ideal, you are also modern—regardless of whether you have girls or you have only boys.

The last year, '93, when we ended this activity, we brought newly married couples, again with the same idea, that those who are newly married, they should not start their family immediately. They should delay pregnancy and have children only when they are mature. So sixty-four of them were invited to Dhaka and again, throughout the country, at the district level, at the project level, you know, these newlywed couples were brought in and given a certificate of praise that, you know, you are national couple, you are modeling—and these newlywed couples, I should add, these newlywed couples were not really new at that time. They were married at least one year.

McFarlane

Without children.

Alauddin

At least married one year. They were using family planning. And their marriages were registered because the registration of marriage is also another national goal that the ministry values. And they were all from rural areas, not from urban areas. They are not employed with the government. So there are certain criteria that we followed. So consistently from '87 to '93 we followed the slogan that the two-child family is a national goal, and delaying pregnancy, spacing apart, and programmatically focusing more on young and low-parity couples, with a consistent message. And Pathfinder really took leadership in this work. The government survey that we conducted now well established that hardly any couple wants more than two children.

McFarlane

Interesting.

Alauddin

Yeah, you know? If you ask any average couple, how many children do you

want, it's no more than two children. Two-child family. Desired family size is two now. Even lower in younger couples. The '93 survey showed that in one divisional number. In Kulna division, one of our divisions, those who were less than twenty years old and have only one child, one out of every ten doesn't want the second child, so that's a significant change that the country has gone through in demography.

McFarlane Did you base this idea—was it communication? I mean, how did you come up with this idea?

Alauddin As I was telling you, the idea came from my own analysis of data. You know, if you have a pattern of family planning use which tells you that your users are mostly thirty years and above and have three or more children, two or more children, you are not going to have two-child family sooner. So if you are to achieve two-child family sooner, faster, your target should be those who have two or less children. So that's the reason we were progressively moving leftward [on a scale with age increasing to the right], meaning that those who were—you have curve like this. So this is age thirty. The prevalence is low here. And you have high prevalence here. And those who have high prevalence, they have high fertility already, it seems. They want to target at birth. You want the couple to plan births. So in order to have the couple plan births, you need to start early, when they have not had four or more children. So that's why our policy, Pathfinder's programming policy, was to start with those who were newly wed, those who have one child, those who have two children. And also to serve others who want to terminate fertility, because they have already achieved high fertility.

So that's how we focus and influence the government in paying more attention to young and low-parity couples. In government documents, you see that concept coming, that pay more attention to young and low-parity couples, newlyweds, young couples. Now, we are moving towards those who are unmarried, but likely to be married soon. So the targeting of population program, targeting for family planning, initially started with high-parity couples because they were ready to use family planning.

McFarlane

They were ready to start.

Alauddin

And then, we gradually moved to younger couples, lower-parity couples, newlyweds. Now we are talking about unmarried couples who are likely to marry soon. We need to prepare them, because we have too many young people. Forty percent of our people, or more than 40 percent of our population, are under the age of ten. So as they come they would boom fertility, because of their young age. This is a momentary thing. So we need to prepare our younger generation who are likely to be married soon. We need to prepare them so that they have fewer children, they have healthy children, they maintain a healthy lifestyle.

McFarlane

Why did you stop in '93?

Alauddin

One reason was [that] the goal of establishing the two-child family as a social norm, as a value, has largely been achieved. TFR is still larger than two-child family. But the concept of two-child family as a norm has more or less been established. Now the focus should be more on reaching out to those who are not reached yet, reaching out to those who have unmet family planning needs. So, focus on family planning management. Service delivery should be

more toward—I guess still there is a call for it, but on the one hand, government did not really continue it, and also on the other, government may have contributed if there was funds available, but USAID did not interest Pathfinder to go more into it.

McFarlane Now, you also worked on decentralizing family planning.

Alauddin Yeah, that's another interesting thing. Rapid presentation—

McFarlane Tell me about it.

Alauddin Okay. A number of things have happened. It's not one or the other. It's a combination of many things that made family planning a success story. One component is decentralization. In the mid-'80s, when President Ershad was in power, he established a local government system called the *upazila* system, sub-district system. The chairman was elected by the people, the people's representative at that level. What we did, we trained those *upazila* chairmen, and the training method also was very interesting.

If you tell an *upazila* leader that Bangladesh has 130,000,000 people, it does not come into his mind the total Bangladesh map and how the people are distributed. Same thing is for me: if you tell me that the world has six billion people, I don't have the entire map of the world—first of all, it is round (laughter), and secondly, I can't imagine how those people are spread over the globe. I don't have the (unclear) of the environment. So what I thought we'll have to present to these leaders, who would be able to relate numbers with space—we took one example of an *upazila*, took the geographic area, took the number of people, and showed the *upazila* chairman what was the population in 1951, how many people it grew by

1961, how many by '71, how many by '81, how many by '91. Those are the census years.

So I took the census data and told them how people grew in numbers, first, and then divided this number by available land—per capita land. What is the per capita land in your area? So you would see that per capita land declines. And even now in rural area, if you are marrying off a daughter, if it is a farm family, they will ask how many acres of land do you have? So land is very valuable, arable land especially. Agricultural land is very valuable. So arable land per capita starts declining. What does that mean? Food is not increasing that much. Okay, let me back up. So land per capita is one indicator. Land per capita declines. Now, let's talk about food. How many months do you grow rice in the arable land you have? That's what's difficult [about] the statistics: your area produced this much of rice this year, this much of rice last year, this much of rice in '51. So the growth of production is increasing, but the per capita crop of rice is declining.

McFarlane

And they understood that.

Alauddin

They understand that. Right? And then another indicator is, [the number of meters of cloth] per capita that you need in Bangladesh for their survival is X meters. How much do you get in reality? You get less than what you need. And our textile [industry] is not booming in terms of production. Again there is a gap. Take, for example, new houses built every year. So population is increasing, new houses are being built. So how many new houses have been built in your area? In my *upazila*, so many new houses came up. And they are taking up the acres of land. Okay, another example: how many primary

schools do you have in your *upazila*? How many primary schools do you plan for your *upazila* to be established, so that you can take all of your kids to primary school? How many high schools do you have?

So you take all of those basic necessities of life, and show them how those basic necessities of life are not being met. Far less talk about equality, improvement, development. So what does all of this tell to you in aggregate? It tells you that your per capita services, per capita land is declining. However hard you are running, you are running a stationary run. You are staying in the same place, although you are sweating a lot. You are working hard. You are leaders—you are promising, but you are not delivering. So what can you do? The world is talking about population growth. Let's join that international effort and implement family planning programs with them.

McFarlane

And they bought it?

Alauddin

The point is, if you have built a rationale, a background and understanding among the leadership, by their own geographic location, by their own numbers, all the schools, number of the schools, number of colleges—because they know how many schools do you have in your *upazila*. Oh, this many. How many you want to propose next year? This many. How many primaries? And how many students a primary teacher has, I mean, [what is the] teacher-student ratio? It is unpreferable. This many students cannot be taught by a single teacher. You want the improvement in education. Quality. Number. Quantity as well as quality. You cannot maintain that. So the answer is, we need to effectively implement family planning.

McFarlane

So you trained each one of them?

Alauddin We trained each one of them, and also even [went to the] lower level, to the union level. So in one session, you gave one example, and get the exercise also to them. In the morning, you give all of these examples, and tell them in the afternoon—put them in a work group. They will draw. They will ask *upazila* chair or family planning officer, Show us: this is my population, this is my school, number of the schools, these are arable lands. Let's calculate what is our per capita land, what is our per capita food. So they all tried to understand and learn the implications of population growth in their own *upazila*, and tried to make family planning as successful as possible. [We did a] similar thing with the students [in the] southern region, with the NGOs.

McFarlane That's the decentralization of family planning.

Alauddin That's the decentralization.

McFarlane So you're basically following what the government was doing with your message.

Alauddin Right. Exactly. You know, I think the most important thing is making the rationale of innovation, making the rationale of changing the values, changing norms, widely understood in their own context, in their own known variables. If you bring in numbers, if you bring in geographic areas larger than the area that they are familiar with, it—

Tape 3 ends; tape 4, side 1, begins.

You know, again, I put together a group of eight religious scholars and asked them to write, even if it was two or three pages, write what Koran says about family planning, what Hadith says about family planning, what theologians say. So we produced eight articles and distributed them throughout the

country to religious schools, to family planning offices, to high schools, you know. And let people know that Islam is not a barrier to healthy families, healthy children and improving the economic condition of the family, of the society. So it is not a barrier. And there are sayings from Holy Koran that you should not leave your children in poverty. So what we did was sort of simultaneous efforts involving the local leaderships and helping them understand population issues with their own known environment, by taking their geographic area and dissecting it by land per capita, food per capita, then what impact it has on children's education. Someone jokingly said that we should also add up how much land we would need for a graveyard.

McFarlane For?

Alauddin For a graveyard. Because—

McFarlane Oh, yeah—people die. (laughter)

Alauddin Because in Dhaka City, there is a graveyard where dead people are buried, one upon another.

McFarlane Uh-huh.

Alauddin So it's not a joke. It's a reality.

McFarlane Right.

Alauddin So involving the leadership, making family planning—even within family planning, understand where the focus should be, where the demographic return would be more through your investment in family planning, what kind of targeting you should be doing, steering the way towards achieving demographic transition. The essence is the time. If you delay achieving replacement level fertility, you add X number of people more, so speeding up

the process is very important. In order to do that, you need simultaneous activity like decentralizing, taking it to the people, making them understand in their own language, in their own perspective, making family planning program management, family planning services more and more effective, reaching out to the underserved population.

McFarlane Who are they?

Alauddin There are—you know, all governments deal with averages, right?

McFarlane Um-hm.

Alauddin Their approach is standardized. But, there are areas that don't fall under that standard. Let's say you have a field worker for X number of families, but in an environment where you have hills—in Africa, for example—you have dispersed population. In Bangladesh, we have one area where it is hilly, mountainous—not really mountainous, it is hills and valleys up there. It is difficult to reach. There are low-lying areas where there is marshy land about six months of the year—a fishing community, so you have to reach out there by boat. It is difficult. And NGOs are trying to reach those areas. It is difficult for the government to reach out everywhere, so NGOs are trying to reach out to all those hard-to-reach areas. You cannot reach out [to] areas all the year equally. In some areas, winter may be even more difficult. Because in winter, you neither can walk, nor boat is viable. So in rainy season maybe it is better because you can reach by boat, but it is more expensive. And because it is more expensive, government field workers, even NGO field workers, are hesitant to go because [it is] expensive.

McFarlane Ah, and they don't want to be the high cost.

Alauddin Right, the high cost. And there are even areas where procurement of supplies, contraceptives from district storehouse to a subdistrict level, becomes difficult because it costs more and government workers don't want to spend money from their own pocket. So government as well as the NGOs are now trying to improve coverage with their services.

McFarlane Is it safe to say that you've had a lot more flexibility working at Pathfinder than you would have in the ministry of health?

Alauddin Oh yeah, of course. Of course. I mean, that's true for all the NGOs, not only for Pathfinder, because USAID funding gave that flexibility to the NGOs. You could budget your expenses tied with space, time, and person. I remember guiding NGOs in budgeting travel expenses, for example. What is the distance? How much is the cost for a rickshaw [to go] there? How much does it cost for a boat there? So we could build that into budget, but it is very difficult for the government to do that kind of assistance, because government deals with bigger, national programs. NGOs deal with localized areas. So it is more feasible, more doable, by the NGOs than the government. Decentralized management by the government becomes difficult. It is easier for the NGO because NGO is personal.

McFarlane I noticed also that you've been credited with moving people toward clinics and away from field workers. Is that a—

Alauddin Yeah.

McFarlane Tell me about that and why is that a good idea?

Alauddin For a number of reasons. Family planning program has really increased in scope of work. It is not just distribution of contraceptives. It is taking care of

health as well. And it has a quality issue attached to it. If the field worker is going out to the house, to the members of the family and try to serve them, you can serve only to a certain extent. Your method becomes Pills and condoms. Condom is perhaps the safest, if you can teach them how to use it. About the Pill—there are some cultural implications from Pill. As a field worker, if you are not conscientious, you may prescribe Pill to a woman having complications. Your supervisor really cannot control you at the household when you are going from one house to the other. So it depends a lot on your training and on your good conscience, on your understanding of quality, you know, and your sense of responsibility.

McFarlane Then how many field workers are we talking about?

Alauddin Oh, we are talking about twenty-five, twenty-six thousand field workers in the government—

McFarlane Twenty-five, twenty-six thousand?

Alauddin Twenty-five, twenty-six thousand.

McFarlane Okay.

Alauddin Okay? In the NGOs, around twelve thousand.

McFarlane So these are large, large—

Alauddin Large, large. So on the one hand, you have a quality issue. On the other, you have also the issue of limited service. You're talking about only Pills and condoms. Maybe (unclear). Maybe ORS [oral rehydration solution] packets. And that's only part of family planning, a tiny part of family planning. You cannot offer injectable, you cannot offer IUD, you cannot offer sterilization. Of course, you know, we started home delivery of injectables. We trained

people and they push contraceptive injection at the house. But that's an area we can skip. So you have limitations in offering services at the home delivery. You cannot offer all services. You cannot ensure quality.

On the other hand, if you are coming to a clinic, you can. A clinician or a paramedic can examine you even for the Pill. Can give you contraceptive injection. Can give you IUD. Can offer sterilization, if you have sterilization at that level. That's for family planning. You know, you could be treated for side effects for family planning. And for maternal health, you can have prenatal care checkup done by a paramedic at the clinic. Then you can have a checkup on your postnatal care. You can have postnatal contraceptive supplies and services. You can immunize your child when you bring in the child to the clinic. So you have lots of advantage if you are coming to [a clinic]—you can ensure quality. You can check quality, also improve quality. You can offer more than one service to the family. If the mother is coming with a child, mother gets the service, the child gets the service. So there are lots of advantages in having, you know, one-stop service.

McFarlane But isn't it hard for a lot of women to get there?

Alauddin It is. It is. [We are] assuming that mobility of the women is still difficult. Things are changing. We see that women's mobility is increasing. Roads have improved. Transport has improved. And people, women, want to come out of their house.

McFarlane Right.

Alauddin They want to have some time of their own. So they like to come and get services for free, I think. I don't say that all of them like to come, but there

are some who are coming to clinic, and this is based on the data that are available, that there is an increase over time of clinic use by women. So taking that as a cue, we started bringing women to the clinic. When I say that we are bringing women to the clinic, I'm not meaning that there is no call for services at the community level. What I did is what is called tiered services. At the community level, you have a community volunteer. You train her on distributing Pills, on a checklist—you know, these are what all of these items are. Yes, give them the Pill, but the first cycle of Pill has to be taken from the paramedic. And paramedic goes to a village where we hold a satellite clinic. So [there is a] once-a-month visit by the paramedic to a village where there is one [person] we call depot holder. She would have Pill and condom or ORS packet. And vitamin, mineral, iron products. Whoever needs supplies would come and get it from there. And there is once-a-month a satellite clinic. The paramedic would come and the women of the village would come to that house—it's in a house—and get services. If you are interested in walking a little bit farther, you would come to the static clinic, either government or NGO. So you have continual services from the clinic, to a satellite clinic, and to a depot holder. Those who have limitations in coming for getting supply of Pills from the clinic, they could go to the depot holder and get the supplies. And the reason we have this tier link-up—continuum of service delivery point—is to serve all of those people, [from those who have] range of flexibility out of the house [to those who have] no flexibility of mobility.

McFarlane When did you start this system?

Alauddin In fact, I did not start the system. I implemented the policy of the

government. Government wanted to try this policy, and this policy has lots of advantages. And the economy cannot afford to have house-to-house delivery of services. So we need to have a system of delivery of services where we could have flexibility for all the people. Those who can come, they would get the services. Those who have difficulty, they can come to the satellite clinic or go to the depot holder. And the long-haul goal is that all of your people would have to come to the clinic. Because—this is my understanding and my prediction about the future. A woman or a housewife who is getting Pill from a field worker now, who is a social science graduate—ten years from now, the housewife or the woman is likely to have tenth-grade education herself. And she would like to have more quality services in terms of checking her body, making sure that she is getting the right choice for herself. So she would like to go to a more skilled provider. That's my vision for the future and if we start now, those who are ready and willing to come, we will be moving in the right direction, and making family planning service delivery more appropriate and—towards improved quality of services.

But at the same time, I'm not saying that those who would be unable to [leave the places where they live] should be left out from services. No. They should not be left out. So that's why we're talking about an unbroken stream, so that people of various social strata, various people living in various conditions, could be served. Like the example that I was giving, in difficult areas where in rainy seasons field worker has difficulty reaching out, because field workers can't have a boat for each one of them. So if you have someone

holding supplies in a village or in a community during the rainy season, you know, the neighboring people can come and get the supplies from them. So I think there are lots of benefits out of this system, and if you are truly futuristic, looking ahead, I think this is one of the directions that we need to have.

McFarlane Let me move you back in a different direction. You've also been somewhat active on the international scene, and you went to Mexico City in '84.

Alauddin Yes, I did.

McFarlane As a delegate?

Alauddin As one of the Bangladesh delegates.

McFarlane Well, tell me what it was like.

Alauddin Well, I was at the university. I had worked with the ministry formerly, wherever there was an opportunity. And the Mexico City conference was one such opportunity. I was involved in writing the kind of background paper, and drafting the minister's speech at the time. And I was included as one of the members of the Bangladesh delegation.

McFarlane How many members, approximately?

Alauddin About seven, if I'm not mistaken.

McFarlane Did Bangladesh—had it switched from '74, or was it positioned pretty similar?

Alauddin I think the position was similar.

McFarlane Similar.

Alauddin It was similar. But Bangladesh also recognized that family planning had to be more vigorously pursued. The upsetting thing was the U.S. position.

McFarlane Was that a surprise?

Alauddin It was a surprise to many countries, not only to Bangladesh, because Bangladesh had problem of economic growth. Still have problem, but at that time we had more than we have now. We were poorer at that time. And U.S., on the one hand, was talking about free economy, economic development, and [yet] restricting family planning resources by their abortion clause. So it was not very pleasant to hear the U.S. position in the Mexico City conference.

McFarlane So you were surprised.

Alauddin It was surprising—

McFarlane Even though you were aware of the U.S. politics.

Alauddin It was surprising in a sense that in '74 conference, in Bucharest conference, U.S. had a clear policy on promoting family planning. They were on the side of family planning. They were saying that here is the best development, you know, not the other way around. And now here in Mexico City, you know, you see a little change, and a shift in gear, that, you know, is focused more on development. And you introduce a restriction on international assistance for family planning. So that was surprising.

McFarlane Did that affect you here, following the so-called Mexico City—

Alauddin It slowed us down. It slowed us down, because—I remember there were two people auditing compliance to Mexico City policy. A team of two people came here, and I took them to our projects.

McFarlane Is that Blaine and Freedman?

Alauddin Yeah.

McFarlane Okay.

Alauddin Yeah. (laughs) Matt Freedman came, and he's now in the U.S.A. embassy.

McFarlane Here?

Alauddin Yeah. Matt Freedman is here. And with—

McFarlane Sharon Camp?

Alauddin I don't remember.

McFarlane Okay.

Alauddin I remember taking Matt and another gentleman, and they were going around and seeing whether they were complying with Mexico City Policy or not. So you know, it slowed down our activities.

McFarlane Was U.S. assistance being used for abortion?

Alauddin No, not in the NGO system. The U.S. was strictly following that compliance act because—

McFarlane But before? Had it been used for abortion?

Alauddin I don't think so. I don't think so.

McFarlane Now, menstrual regulation is available in Bangladesh?

Alauddin It's available.

McFarlane And who funds that?

Alauddin It's a government program.

McFarlane And menstrual regulation gets around the abortion question, right?

Alauddin It does. It does.

McFarlane Because you don't know if the woman's pregnant or—

Alauddin That's right. You don't know whether the woman is pregnant or not. So it's getting back to monthly cycles.

McFarlane And the government funds that.

Alauddin It's a government program.

McFarlane But technically now the government could use U.S. population assistance for menstrual regulation. The government's not subject to a—

Alauddin No, government cannot do that. In fact, U.S. assistance in Bangladesh for family planning comes mostly to NGOs, not to government. Government assistance is in terms of technical assistance, like assistance for logistics management, improvement in logistics planning, logistic supply management, procurement, not—U.S. money doesn't go directly to the government for service delivery. It's for the NGO.

McFarlane What percentage of the services is provided by the government?

Alauddin Mostly by the government. NGOs currently cover one-fifth of the population in the country.

McFarlane One-fifth.

Alauddin One-fifth. U.S. assistance has been focused on the NGOs, and initially NGOs started in the urban areas, where government did not have an infrastructure—having field worker to provide services to the population. So initially NGOs started working in urban areas. And since mid-eighties, NGOs started moving out to rural areas. And now, NGOs cover about 20 percent of both rural and urban areas.

Tape 4, side 1, ends; side 2 begins.

USAID NGOs cover far less than the government. USAID NGOs cover about 20 percent. The current NSDP, NGO service delivery program, covers

20 percent, both rural and urban. And farms, forty-one NGOs. (pause in recording) The way I can pride myself is—I think I am shy in presenting myself, my work. In Asian standard, it is considered shy. I am shy in the sense that I cannot drum up my own work. I'm a reporter—there is my achievement. So that has been my characteristics, I think, from the very beginning. And more so perhaps with regard to my work with Pathfinder.

McFarlane Interesting. (pause in recording)

Alauddin About decentralization, I think I need to add that—I think it was '86. Myself, Sigrid Anderson, and NGO director at that time at the USAID in Dhaka, Sara Seims—you will be knowing or hearing her name. Sara Seims.

McFarlane She's going to Hewlett.

Alauddin She was at Ford Foundation.

McFarlane And then she was the head of the Alan Guttmacher [Institute]—

Alauddin Right, right.

McFarlane And now she's going to Hewlett.

Alauddin Oh, is she?

McFarlane Yeah, she's taking Joe Speidel's place.

Alauddin Okay. Three of us went to Indonesia to design a study tour program for *upazila* chairmen and other government officials. And we were taken to several places to meet civil leaders. Does Sumparno, the country representative for Pathfinder Indonesia—he himself, and other officers sort of scouting for us for these activities. And in one *upazila*, we went in the afternoon and the leader of that particular area—I forgot the concept. Similar to a subdistrict or *upazila*. He was making a presentation on how many

coconut trees he has distributed, how many condoms he has distributed, his area has gotten, how many Pills. He was giving an account of how many people, how many individual couples et cetera, et cetera. And I was so amazed that, you know, he's not a population professional, he's not a government—he's not a provider or manager. He's the leader of that area. And he's so well conversant about his geographic location, about his people, about his area's characteristics, about how many people have gotten services, family planning services from his officers, and so on and so forth. I was really amazed. I mean, how come this leader is so well versed?

Then I asked him, "What made you so conversant about these population issues and how come you are so articulate?" And he told me, "I have learned all of this from a population officer." He's very good. And he used to tell visitors, "Now I have taken over from him and I tell my visitors what I do about family planning. This is very important to me and I take it with my heart. This is the most important job that I do after I have learned this."

So I asked him, "Was it possible to [do something similar with other] people?" Of course you can do it! The only thing you will have to—first of all, you have to acquaint your leader with the geographic area he deals with. (laughter) And then, you can ask him to map—in fact, he has in his mind where the river is flowing, where the mountain is, where school is, where the college is located, where religious school is, where mosque is, where temple is. He has those in his mind. So if you can implant in his mind population issues and link those geographic spots, you know you are onto it. You will be

able to create a big commitment in his mind and get his heart and soul into population issues.

That was the place from where I got the cue that here I need to train *upazila* leaders who are elected and who are familiar with this geographic area and I can implement family planning issues and agenda in [their] minds and build up a strong commitment in [their] leadership. That's how this Ershad was very, very happy in having involved his *upazila* chairmen in population program. And I had one professor doing some assessment on this. I have to find out whether I have the report or not. He did a preliminary assessment, a quick assessment and he was very impressed that these mini-demographers—he used to call them mini-demographers (laughs)—so that's how I think leadership involvement was very effective and fruitful. We took cultural leaders, legal leaders to Indonesia, you know?

McFarlane Yeah.

Alauddin And we went there—Sara Seims, myself and Sigrid—to design a study tour for *upazila* leaders. And So we took—

McFarlane From here?

Alauddin Yeah, from here. And I went through the first batch, you know, and then later on government adopted that program. Some of the NGO leaders also went, you know—of course on different agenda. We take the NGO leaders to Indonesia to see for themselves how they are generating the revenues from family planning services. So that was on account of making family planning sustainable, generating revenues so that small cost recovery is done to family planning services, cost sharing by the customers.

Tape 4 ends; tape 5, side 1, begins.

- McFarlane** This is Deborah McFarlane in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on the second day of interviews with Dr. Mohammad Alauddin [October 4, 2003]. (pause in recording)
- Alauddin** Okay, Deborah, should I call it a geographic lesson for you for Bangladesh?
- McFarlane** Thank you, yes.
- Alauddin** Bangladesh is—for administrative purposes, Bangladesh is divided into several cells, several subdivisions. The first slice is into six pieces. And they are called divisions. And each division is again divided into districts. And we have sixty-four districts.
- McFarlane** Does each one of the divisions have an equal number of districts?
- Alauddin** No, they vary by size.
- McFarlane** Okay.
- Alauddin** So some have more, some have less. And each district is again subdivided into what we call an *upazila*—it's more or less equal to your county.
- McFarlane** Okay.
- Alauddin** And their number is 460. And again, further division of *upazila* is into what you call union. And we have forty-five hundred unions in the country. And unions are composed of what is called wards.
- McFarlane** Oh, okay.
- Alauddin** And each union has nine wards, right? And wards are composed of villages. Three to four villages together is called a ward.
- McFarlane** Okay.
- Alauddin** And we have roughly sixty-eight to seventy thousand villages.

McFarlane Do those vary by size?

Alauddin They vary by size. And after the ward level, we have a system of election. You know, at union level we have union Parisad. It's a local government. And union Parisad chairman is elected by the people. And union Parisad has union Parisad chairman and several members. And members are elected by the population within the ward. And we have three female members to represent female population in the union Parisad.

McFarlane That's a requirement?

Alauddin That's a requirement. That's a change in the political system of local government. Earlier, women representation was not there. Now, we have union-level representation by females. So we have ward members—for three wards I think we have one female member. So that's the significant change with regard to status of women in Bangladesh.

McFarlane When did that change happen, approximately?

Alauddin It happened within last ten years. And even more interestingly, many of those who have been family planning field workers or volunteers have become elected members to the union Parisad.

McFarlane Because everyone knows them?

Alauddin Because many people know them. They have the contact. They have established themselves as a leader in the community and their opinion is valued. People come to them for advice or help. So it's a tremendous change, I think, that has happened.

McFarlane That's fascinating.

Alauddin It is fascinating.

McFarlane I wanted to back up a little and get a sense of what a day at Pathfinder, if there was a typical day—or how many NGOs, how many people worked for you. I mean, you're dealing with vast amounts of money.

Alauddin I don't know how you would define an average day, because average kept changing year after year. Because when I started in '84, I had only, I think, four program officers: two accounting staff, one admin officer. So altogether, let's say, including support staff, ten, twelve people, with a budget of 200,000 dollars a year. Now, that changed over time, significantly. When I ended the USAID project in June of 2002, we spent on an average, I think, thirty-three million dollars over a period of five years. And we had at that time forty-five staff.

McFarlane So it was totally different.

Alauddin Totally different. And in terms of the population coverage, I was—you were asking me yesterday how many people we covered when I began. I checked my numbers. It's 200,000 eligible couples. And now, we cover one-fifth of the population in Bangladesh, 20 percent of the population.

McFarlane That's fabulous.

Alauddin I know, that's fabulous. And the staff that I mentioned was only for part-time work. We were funding, at that time, nineteen NGOs. So we had nineteen NGOs' staff to monitor, to supervise and also we had depot holders—[the depot holder is] the volunteer from within a community she serves. I didn't check my numbers, how many depot holders we had. In the annual report, you know, you will find almost every village had one depot holder. And this is another phenomenon that I want to make a special point

on. These depot holders are volunteers from the community. She's a resident of the community where she serves the neighboring population. On an average, two hundred, two hundred fifty families are within her command area. She has been given training for the task and process. You know, she was given theoretical training, then practical, then she came back again to review what she learned in the field. So through a process of training, we have given them the skill of screening clients for Pills and for giving condoms. And she also has a supply of ORS packets, oral rehydration packet. Sometimes she also gives vitamin supplements, like iron tablets, and in some cases—

McFarlane Which USAID won't pay for?

Alauddin No, this is a social marketing company. In some places, you know, she would have iodized salt because, again, that is a health supply. And they have been trained to sell these supplies to the people, and the margin that she would make as a profit would go to her as her incentive. In addition to that, USAID funding paid two hundred *taka* a month as an honorarium. And she is required to come to a monthly meeting when she is reimbursed [for transportation] expense. And she is given a snack because she spends almost the entire day at the meeting. They are doing super job at the community level. They are respected. People come to them for advice. She also refers people to satellite clinic, to a static clinic [farther away].

McFarlane How do you know they're doing their super job?

Alauddin How do we know?

McFarlane Yeah.

Alauddin Again, this is another area that we have made a significant contribution in terms of system building. There is elaborate record keeping. So every Pill sold, every dozen condoms sold, the depot holder would keep a record. She would not only keep a record how many Pills she's sold, she would also keep a record of how much money she has earned. She has to know.

McFarlane Do the prices vary?

Alauddin Prices vary. If you are selling government supplies, the price is less. If you are selling social marketing supplies of Pills and condoms, social marketing has a fixed price.

McFarlane Oh, okay.

Alauddin So you have to adhere to their policy of pricing. And government Pill is still free, but NGOs sell them with a nominal price. We call them service charge, not price. So within the government system, condom is priced so the depot holder [can charge] a little higher than the government price, because she would like to make a margin out of it. So she keeps a record and her supervisor reviews those records for correctness. She has been trained to record. In some cases, the depot holders are illiterate.

McFarlane They're—okay.

Alauddin And they get the help from their daughter or son who goes to school, or from husband, in recording what she does. So every month she submits a report to her supervisor and she claims her reimbursement of incentives out of the same process. She doesn't retain the profit. She submits those profits to the office and then she gets a share of it.

McFarlane So she gives all the money to them, and then they give her her share back.

Alauddin Her share. She also keeps record of how many clients she has referred to a higher level of service delivery points. Because for every successful referred case, if there is a charge made to the patient, the depot holder will get half of that share. So she keeps elaborate records, [both] for her interest and the interest of the project. So you have record kept at the depot holder level, record kept at the monthly satellite clinic, record kept at the static clinic, which is held everyday. So you add all of those performances and submit it to Pathfinder. Pathfinder will collect through a MIS [management information] system for performance of all these types and generate a report, and USAID would get a copy of it. And every respective local family planning officer at the *upazila* level would get a copy of work performance, because we are accountable to the government for their supplies, because government gives their supplies of contraceptives. We give a performance report to *upazila*, family planning officer and also a consumption report of supplies. So we account for how much we have done in terms of people served and how much supplies we have consumed through our services, so that we become fully accountable to the local officer for family planning. And we would put in a requisition for supplies for the next month.

McFarlane So the contraceptive distribution takes place at the *upazila* level?

Alauddin No, at the village level.

McFarlane Village level.

Alauddin At the lowest level.

McFarlane Okay.

Alauddin And *upazila* has an office for family planning, for health.

- McFarlane** At the village level the government's giving supplies to the people?
- Alauddin** No. At the village level—we get the supplies from the government.
- McFarlane** Meaning?
- Alauddin** Pathfinder and NGOs, supported NGOs.
- McFarlane** Oh, so—and then Pathfinder in turn distributes that throughout its system.
- Alauddin** Pathfinder itself doesn't take the supply. The NGO, funded by Pathfinder, gets the supply from the government because that system has been set—that is an agreement with the government, that Pathfinder-supported NGOs would get supply from the local office of family planning.
- McFarlane** Oh, okay.
- Alauddin** So our NGOs go to the local office with the performance report, with the logistics consumption report, and a request for supply for the next month.
- McFarlane** Is the government system as sophisticated as the Pathfinder NGOs?
- Alauddin** It is not as sophisticated, but government has also a system of MIS.
- McFarlane** Okay.
- Alauddin** So they keep record of how much supplies government has given to an NGO, how much has been consumed and what is the indent for the next month. So government has a system and that system, again, has been developed with assistance from USAID. USAID has a project especially for assisting the government in logistics management.
- McFarlane** What's that called?
- Alauddin** That's called family planning logistics management.
- McFarlane** Okay. And has this system that you've developed here in Bangladesh been used elsewhere?

Alauddin In terms of our MIS, within Pathfinder system, I think ours is the best. And I don't think anywhere in the Pathfinder system is such an elaborate MIS kept.

McFarlane Have other Pathfinder countries or offices adopted your system, or have you provided technical assistance to them?

Alauddin We have shared. I have shared our experience and system with the rest of the Pathfinders, rest of the program in international staff meeting. And also I have given consultancy to Tanzania in developing their community-based service delivery system.

McFarlane So you went there to help?

Alauddin Yeah, I went there and helped design their system. And what I heard is that their system is working very well. That makes me very happy. Again, you know, Pathfinder Dhaka is the largest program of Pathfinder—

McFarlane It is?

Alauddin Within Pathfinder, we are the largest.

McFarlane By far?

Alauddin By far. And our system is far more fully developed than other systems. Although by saying so, I am not meaning that the systems that followed in other countries are bad or inferior, because Pathfinder as a whole has a good MIS system. As an organization, Pathfinder maintains a very good management information system. So you will find data for every country where Pathfinder has a program. The content of the MIS had varied from one country to the other. But you will get good information from the system. So as I was pointing out, this involvement of depot holders and their role, their visibility, their leadership, their concern for the community, is another

indicator of social change, especially with regard to changing the status of women.

McFarlane How did this change in requiring representation by women—what made that happen?

Alauddin Women were asking for it, and also the government felt that the time has come to hear women's voice and women should be taken into the mainstream of the politics. So you will be surprised to hear that I think in Asia—I don't have the exact knowledge or information, but I think in Asia, Bangladesh is the first one where we have set up a ministry for women's affairs.

McFarlane Huh. That's remarkable.

Alauddin Yeah, and President Ziaur Rahman must be credited for that. He has introduced that ministry of women's affairs. And I think that that tells the government that we—members of Bangladesh society recognize that women are important and their voice should be heard. They should be involved in politics, they should be given jobs—there is even a women's group of the chamber of commerce. There is a subgroup of the chamber of commerce constituted by women. So, you know, those who are involved in business, in trade and commerce, they have their own group. So there is tremendous change taking place with regard to women's status, women's education. There is scholarship for girls in rural area, those who are enrolled in secondary school from six to class ten. They get a stipend. At the primary level, from class one to class five, families get support, a monthly allowance for sending their boys and girls to school. There is no difference in terms of

enrollment in primary school, although still a higher proportion of girls drop out because of social and economic reasons.

McFarlane Is early marriage still an issue?

Alauddin Still an issue. We are trying to deal with that, and trying to do advocacy and promote human education.

McFarlane How do you do that? I mean, what are your ideas?

Alauddin Take, for example—I have a project right now. It's a small project funded by anonymous donor. We don't know who is funding that.

McFarlane You don't know if it's in country or out?

Alauddin I know that the money is coming from the U.S. I submitted the idea to some funders. I think the way it works [is], you propose ideas to a group of people, a group of managers. And those managers send out those proposals to potential donors. And they say that, Well, you know, I want to pick up this.

McFarlane The managers are who?

Alauddin There is a group of people—I don't know them.

McFarlane Well, you had to send them—

Alauddin I sent it to Pathfinder.

McFarlane Oh, okay.

Alauddin Pathfinder knows them.

McFarlane I mean, it sounds—

Alauddin But they're not the donor.

McFarlane Oh, they're just—

Alauddin They're the generator of funds.

McFarlane Okay.

Alauddin They will spare some money for developing countries.

McFarlane Yeah.

Alauddin They will send ten ideas to you. So these are the ten ideas coming from, you know, different countries, and one of them is from Bangladesh. So what I proposed is supplementing girls' education in primary school. The government gives money to the family. And poor families, you know, in some cases spend the money for family needs. It may not directly go to the girls. But that also helps. But the girls from poor families would need appropriate dress, respectable dress for the school. They would need pencil, they would need paper, they would need stationery, they would need sandals for going to school. So I proposed the idea that I would like to supplement a school dress, some stationery, and a pair of sandals so that they can look respectable for their school, so they don't feel less self-esteem.

McFarlane They don't look like poor girls.

Alauddin They don't look like poor girls. They would like a nice appearance at the class. And I propose to start with class three, third grade. The reason I choose third grade is that that's a demonstration that they have willingness to go forward, you know? They have come from class one, class two, up to three. So we include girls from class three, class four, and class five, and support them with this supplement. When they graduate from class five, we would provide them, again, a dress, a school dress, and a few *taka* for admission. So they will be admitted to secondary school, class six, grade six. They would get a dress, they would get cost for admission, and they would also get supplement for stationery for the first year, to catch up with

scholarship in secondary school. So in the process, they will not drop out. They will not leave early. And hopefully, when they go to secondary class, sixth grade, they will feel more inspired and continue with the school.

McFarlane How long has this project been—

Alauddin This is for three years.

McFarlane Is it ongoing?

Alauddin It's just begun this year. From July it has begun. A part of this project is, again, supporting with a scholarship sixty girls who have graduated from tenth grade. And they have to be coming from poor families and they are not married yet, but are willing to get some kind of education where their employability would increase. So I have proposed an idea that those who are tenth grade graduates, we would like to give them a scholarship—living expenses and [reimbursement] for paramedic training.

McFarlane Wow.

Alauddin In the health field. And NGOs look for paramedics for employment, so soon after they graduate, after a year of training, they would have skill for employment in NGOs. And they have a better life for themselves and they will be able to maintain a better family for themselves.

McFarlane While contributing to the country.

Alauddin Contributing to the country. And another idea is that perhaps they would serve more poor people than the current middle-class paramedics.

McFarlane Um-hm.

Alauddin So I consider it as a pro-poor intervention, in terms of creating skilled manpower from within the poor category. So I'm very happy that this project

has been funded. The area that I selected was again based on very objective criteria. I know that there are dropouts throughout the country. I took the government statistics and tried to figure out which district has the most dropouts. And I found it.

McFarlane So you took the challenge.

Alauddin Yeah. I found out. Deborah, all of my projects, all of the work that I did [was] based on research using secondary data. And I found the district—it's a low-lying district, the people are poor, dropout rate is high—

Tape 5, side 1, ends; side 2 begins.

Again, I think this district has thirteen *upazila*. And what I selected are the poorest *upazila*. And from these *upazila* there are two hundred fifty schools, primary schools. And from all of these schools, we have already selected, the NGO have already selected, three thousand girls. They will be getting dresses very soon. They will be getting school supplies. Dresses are being made.

McFarlane Do they wear uniforms here?

Alauddin Yeah. In primary schools—in urban schools they have dresses but not all schools have uniforms. But I am giving uniforms to these girls, because it would be difficult to have various types of dresses for them, you know?

McFarlane Yeah, you don't want—

Alauddin Unfortunately, I have to give them uniform because—

McFarlane Right.

Alauddin I wish that there was a way of not uniforming them. (laughs)

McFarlane Uh-huh. I just wondered.

Alauddin Because you don't want to single them out, you know, as recipient of dress

from somewhere else.

McFarlane Right.

Alauddin I think that is less respectful for them. So I'm very happy that this project has come to [this]. I am always thinking of how I can promote delayed marriage, promote delayed pregnancy, promote contraception, promote healthy lifestyle. And I hunt for ideas, as I review, as I read journals, read research articles, review research data and try to identify new ideas for hunting money.

McFarlane Your own sister married at thirteen or fourteen.

Alauddin Yes.

McFarlane When did you start thinking about delaying marriage for girls?

Alauddin I tell you. There are historical moments that trigger ideas in your head. When I came back in '79, I was involved in a research project funded by Ford Foundation. The research project was maternal health, maternal mortality. I conducted the research study in my own *upazila*, and found a high level of maternal mortality. And when I analyzed the data, I found that those who are too young, less than twenty, have the highest maternal mortality. Those who were thirty and above had the [lowest] mortality. So you have a maternal mortality pattern clearly showing that those who are having early fertility are most likely to be subjected to maternal death. So one intervention that you can think of is delaying marriage.

Another intervention you can think of, since you cannot quickly change the cultural norm, cultural pattern, you start thinking of intervening within marriage, and that intervention is use of family planning. So that's from where I started the idea that we need to address and popularize family

planning use among the younger population, among younger couples. If you can delay their pregnancy, you are contributing to reduction of maternal mortality. If you can space pregnancy among the young people, young girls, you are contributing to reduction of maternal mortality. So that's how I figured out that I can contribute here and here. Through my job with Pathfinder, I have the opportunity of [applying] my research knowledge into programming.

McFarlane Right.

Alauddin So that's how my research knowledge, you know, started plowing back to a program.

McFarlane Did you have any personal difficulties with delaying it? I mean—

Alauddin For myself?

McFarlane Yeah.

Alauddin No, I married late. Does it surprise you?

McFarlane Yeah.

Alauddin I guess it's not related to fertility, but it's related to my own career and this understanding of how early marriage, early fertility, early pregnancy, you know, affects life.

McFarlane Would your sisters agree with this?

Alauddin I think they would. You know, my nieces are not married that young. And my sister's daughters are not married that early. So they agree that this is important. So your professional training, your knowledge of the field, really contributes to programming intervention. And in my case, I extensively used my research knowledge, my data, in programming. And as I mentioned to

you, part of the success that Bangladesh has achieved—I would say that a significant part of it is research, data-based programming, both in the government as well as in the NGOs. And NGOs were in the lead. NGOs show the government that this is where the greatest return would come if you are intervening here.

McFarlane So you've got very educated people in the NGOs.

Alauddin We've got very smart people in the NGOs.

McFarlane Is this different from other countries that you're aware of?

Alauddin I think in general you could say that. I should qualify. It is not that people in the NGOs are smarter—

McFarlane They're definitely well-educated.

Alauddin Yeah, well educated. I think the significant thing is that because NGOs work in collaboration with donors, because NGOs are asked to continuously be critical, analytical, and look for windows of opportunities, based on reality, based on the current situation—whenever you're developing a project in the NGO sector, the first question you are asked is, What is the current situation?

McFarlane Um-hmm.

Alauddin What is the current understanding, right? How does the field look now? Where the intervention is possible and why you think that this intervention is profitable for demographic reasons or health reasons. So you constantly look for the ideas as well as feasibility of them, the impact. So in the NGO sector, because you are accountable for result, you are result-driven. So you constantly try to improve upon and increment your performance, increment

your innovation, increment your intervention. So that's how NGOs tend to be smarter in internalizing that data.

McFarlane Did you push the NGOs you funded in that direction?

Alauddin Oh yes. Oh yes. In NGOs you build one intervention upon another upon another. It's an incremental process.

McFarlane So this is the teaching you were talking about.

Alauddin This is the teaching I was talking about. I started with two-child family, right? And showed them in a graph that, See, this is the distribution. Tell us who are your clients. Who are using family planning? What is their profile? What is their age, what is their number of children, right? So their age is thirty, thirty-five. Their number of children is four, five, right? What is your goal? Your goal is to serve families, right? So if you are staying with this population and serving them very well, you know, would you be able to achieve two-child family? No. How can we achieve a two-child family, because they have already three, they have already four.

So what you need to do—they would answer that this is what we need to do: we need to start family planning sooner, when they're young, when they have less than two children. So you redirect your focus from high parenting, high age group to low parenting, to younger age group. And then move them towards—you know, I brought them towards the newly wed couples. I brought them towards unmarried, soon-to-be married adolescents, young girls. It is amazing to see that young girls come to clinic and yet they're not married. They're getting TT [tetanus toxoid] shot. So this change didn't happen all at a time. We had to go incrementally, you know, step by step,

process by process, to the younger population.

McFarlane And that's what you've been thinking about?

Alauddin And that's what I have been thinking, and inculcating that thought into the NGO leadership, into the NGO managers, into the NGO field workers. And NGO field workers also have to be a model for this. When I began my work with Pathfinder, I reviewed the profile of the field workers themselves, because I wanted the field workers to be the model at the community level. So I promoted the idea that the new field workers, whoever we were recruiting, should not have more than two children.

McFarlane Hm. Were you popular?

Alauddin Well, you know, the idea was accepted.

McFarlane Okay.

Alauddin The average family size in the field workers or in the supervisors is close to two.

McFarlane Oh, okay.

Alauddin So if you're talking to a village woman that it's good to have two children, you know, you shouldn't have more than two children. You are likely to be asked, "Apa, dear sister, how many do you have?" Right?

McFarlane Yeah.

Alauddin So in order to respond to them, to become a model to them, you have to think of having a model work force, you know?

McFarlane Right, okay.

Alauddin You're presenting the values that you are promoting. So you have to characterize yourself with the values that you are promoting. So I think that's

how social changes occur faster, sooner. Because you've had to model the values that you're talking about, you are promoting. And field workers have done wonderful work in that area. And often we think—you know, those of us who are high-level researchers, investigators, analysts—we think that graphs and charts are only understood by people who have [more] education. But if you can present them intelligently, you know, in the [proper] context, with the data that they deal with on a daily basis, it is easy to make them understand, feed them what is going on and build the value rationale into them for the work that they're doing. If they don't understand why they are doing what they're doing, it becomes sterile, uninteresting, repetitive work. But if you can build that background into them, rationale into them, the value into them [of] what they're contributing, it is not just family planning. It is health, it is economy, it is social status. It is good life. So all those need to be inculcated into the process so that your workforce is carrying the value that you are communicating.

McFarlane It sounds to me like you're a big proponent of training.

Alauddin I am.

McFarlane I mean, this sounds like an ongoing process, not, We'll see you once a year.

Alauddin No, it's not. Because you cannot foresee all of the training needs that your providers or your managers will need. Take, for example, the concept of quality of care, that one of the scientists, Dr. Bruce, Judy Bruce, in Population Council—you know, she promoted the concept of quality of care in health field. This concept came from the experience that the client needs to understand that the services she is receiving are safe, and will not harm

her—that the services she is receiving [are being provided] with great care, with great attention. And she has the choice of saying no to one or the other matter. You have to provide all the choices to her. You have to counsel her with both pros and cons. You don't push one or the other, even though you are serving illiterate clients.

McFarlane It's about respecting, too.

Alauddin You have to be responsive to the client.

McFarlane Yeah.

Alauddin You cannot promote your own perspective. [You must] take the client's perspective into it, and then provide the services. That concept has to be transferred to the field worker. And it is not easy; it is not done in one shot. So you have to role play, you have to bring experience from the field, and then, also have an [open] mind. You will be honest, you will be candid in expressing your experience, in narrating your experience.

It may so happen—in some cases, field workers say, without understanding, that Pill will be good for you. No. In that case you are prescribing. You are becoming a doctor. You are not leaving it open to the recipient to make a choice. At times, field workers say that maybe we have not said all the cons about it. In order to convince her we highlighted the positive aspects of it. We have not talked openly, frankly, [about] the side effects. So you need courage. The field workers also need courage to talk about their own experiences—they're not really all that great for the concept of quality of care. So it's a constant mind-set changing, because you are subjecting yourself to change first. And then you are becoming a proponent

for change. So training is very critical. Training is important—very, very important.

McFarlane You've done a lot of training of people from other countries as well, haven't you?

Alauddin I did.

McFarlane Can you tell me a little bit about that?

Alauddin Let's take a—(pause in recording)

McFarlane You've done a lot of training of people from other countries. Can you tell me about some of that work?

Alauddin Okay, let me start with the earliest one that I was involved in. I think it was in '87 or '88. We had two visitors from Egypt, one male and a female. We took them to our CBD project—CBD is the acronym for Community Based Distribution—we took them to typical Bangladesh village and our field workers showed them where—showed them by visiting house to house, because at that time, field workers were required to go from house to house. Although we called it community based, it was indeed household-based service delivery, because field workers went from house to house. And they were amazed to see how meticulous the field worker was, going from one house to the other, and the record that they were keeping for each of the clients that they were visiting. So they came back and we reviewed what they have learned. And they were saying that back home, their field workers are not so meticulous, are not so rigorous in visiting their households. And the lesson that they were taking is that they need to have similar kind of approach for their program. But they were at the same time cautioning

themselves that, because houses are scattered, especially in the rural areas, it would be difficult for them. But one thing that was impressive to them was our analysis of clients by age and parenting. We showed them the analysis I was talking about before, by age and parenting. And they were acknowledging that they are not doing that kind of analysis and targeting and programming activities based on data. So they were impressed by our analysis and taking data into program. So that was my first experience with visitors.

McFarlane

And they came here because they knew you had a successful program?

Alauddin

They came here because our CBD program was well organized and we were doing better in terms of serving people in the rural area. Since then, I have received visitors from India, Pakistan, Nigeria, Nepal, Tibet, and also from Indonesia. Indonesia has a successful program, but I received visitors from Indonesia. The message really we give to them is that you can learn lessons from other countries, you can get ideas from other countries, but the intervention has to really come from home. It has to be homegrown. Because every country is different in some ways. In some ways, there are commonalities. But in order to be effective in reproductive health program—our success is based on involving the local leadership, involving local people as provider, involving local people, especially women, as managers and convincing the local people, local leadership, that family planning would help them and would help them in very many ways. So those ways have to be demonstrated to them.

McFarlane

Do you think that's a universal truth?

Alauddin

I think that's universally true. That's universally true.

McFarlane What needs to be tailored is how you do that and—

Alauddin It needs to be tailored, it needs to be tailored, and as I told you, the rationale of doing family planning, the rationale of programming for reproductive health, has to be understood by the common people. I know that innovations come from top. The new ideas, new thoughts, new thinking, new direction, even new programs come from the top, because top has the bigger exposure. But unless that new idea is accepted, understood, especially the rationale of it is understood, why we have to accept this new idea—people are always opposed to change. In every society, in every culture, change is a dreadful word, a dreadful thing. You are used to taking the same route every morning, coming back the same way, because you know it. You feel safe. You are not scared. Same thing happens for development programs. We need to reduce our family size, but we are used to having more children. We are used to having more children because we are [frightened]. We were scared by high mortality.

So you have to assure the families that high mortality is no more a fearful thing. Mortality is preventable. This is how we prevent it, and have already prevented it. Look at those two-child families. Look at those families [who] have only three children. They're healthy, they are safe. So you have to build the rationale into the minds of the people, and gradually make that rationale bigger and bigger. Make those converters, those who are convinced that their sight is bigger and bigger, and demonstrate to the people, have annual meeting, have semi-annual meeting and bring those who are users, bring those who are non-users, let them see that there are users. So you know, you

snowball by demonstrating the success. And success will convince other people to adopt the behavior. So that change has to come from within. You can be inspired by others' success, by others' experiences, but you have to tailor it to your own circumstances, your own situation. That's the message that I have always given to those who had come to visit us and have taken our experience. I need to make a point here. NGOs are—I call the NGOs the leaders in managing what the statisticians call outliers, [what] sociologists call deviant. NGO leaders are good at managing those outliers, those deviants.

Tape 5 ends; tape 6, side 1, begins.

NGOs are, by definition—PVOs [private volunteer organizations] or social welfare volunteer organizations, by definition, by their characteristics, are the civil society. They are composed of grassroots-level people. And within the grassroots level, those who are NGO leaders, they are visionary. They are agents of change. And changes starts occurring in small numbers. Even, in some cases, maybe one or two. NGOs are good at promoting these small numbers and increasing the numbers gradually. So those who are deviant, their number is small. Think of those families who are the first family planning users. Somewhere in Bangladesh, family planning use started, and initially started in urban areas. And NGOs started working with them. They were not socially praised at that time.

McFarlane Quite the opposite, right?

Alauddin Quite the opposite. So NGOs had to find out ways of praising them and increasing their number. So when you have the small number, they are the

deviants, they are the outliers. Because they doesn't fall in the norm. In a society where marriage is held through negotiation between families—if a boy or a girl marry in accord by her or his choice, by the choice of the boy and the girl, you are a deviant, because that is not a socially acceptable way of marrying. And others can be brought in for family planning. You know, you are supposed to have children sooner, demonstrate your fertility, have as many children as Allah gives. If you start preventing pregnancy, you are a deviant.

But NGOs promoted that deviant behavior publicly, at the individual level, at the community level, at the national level. So NGOs started in urban areas on a small scale. When they had success in one area, they took their success to another area. From urban areas they took the success to the rural areas and promoted the concept that family planning is good and is healthy. It's a welcome behavior. So that's how we started snowballing. And now it is known. Of you are not using family planning and having more children, you fear to say how many children you have. You know, in our time, there was no effective family planning—five or four. If you ask a young couple they would say, Well, you know, I have one. I have two. So now, that value has changed. And how has that change happened? It happened through small numbers. The small numbers started increasing. You have now, in Bangladesh, at one time or another, 65 percent of married couples have used family planning. If you make a survey now, if you ask, Are you using family planning, you'll find more than 50 percent saying that, Yes, we are using family planning. If you are asking a newly wed couple, How many children

you wish to have in your reproductive life, they would say, no more than two or three.

McFarlane Does this change surprise you?

Alauddin This change pleases me very much. It doesn't surprise me, because in a sociological perspective, you know that changes add up, and [it takes] time [for these attitudes to become] a value, time to be a norm. So it is very pleasant experience for me that it has become a norm. Desired family size is no [longer] four, five, three. It is two, or even less in some cases. I was telling you yesterday that 10 percent of the families who are less than twenty and have one child say that they don't want to have a second child. So the change that we wanted to promote, wanted to translate into reality of life, we can see that it is happening.

In the mid-seventies, we had a family size of 6.6. Now, the family size is half of that, 3.3. You see the decline. And our vision is that in about fifteen, twenty years—our national goal is to achieve the two-child family by the year 2005. But I think that's too soon. I don't think we will be able to achieve that. Within ten, fifteen years, we'll achieve that goal. Who knows, by the mid of this century, maybe we will stabilize our population. And maybe someday there will be again a thought that we need to increase our family size. (laughs) In case of Bangladesh. There are countries in Europe that think their family size is too small. They need to increase their population. Malaysia at one point in time—I think it was twenty years ago—Malaysia had an effective family planning program. They were promoting small families. Now they are talking about increasing family size.

McFarlane Where?

Alauddin Malaysia. So given the thought that we need to decrease our population, we started the idea of family planning. We are succeeding now. And we shall achieve the success in about ten, fifteen years, and stabilize our population. And I think we are looking for that to happen.

McFarlane Bangladesh has been cited as a country where fertility has dropped before economic development. Do you agree with that?

Alauddin Yes. We are not economically developed. And the fertility transition theory that we have read in school does not correspond with what is happening in Bangladesh. The fertility transition tells you that you need to have social and economic change preceding fertility change. You need to have high income, you need to have high level of education—not only high literacy, but also high level of education, high level of employment. Economic status of female should be higher. Their employment should be higher, but all those are not higher for Bangladesh. All those are lower for Bangladesh. Here, fertility has changed. The economic condition has not changed, you know, it's true, but I think that one important thing that has happened for Bangladesh is change in the aspiration of the people. People aspire to have good life. People aspire to prosperity for the country. (pause in recording)
People aspire to a better life, better conditions, and also—

McFarlane Where did that come from?

Alauddin I think international exposure is one. And also, it's not that change in social and economic conditions is not happening. It is also happening but at a slower pace. We see improvement in availability of food, we see changes in

education, both for boys as well as for girls—particularly for girls. Changes are happening. Employment for female population has increased. And again, I would credit family planning program for female employment in the government, as well as in the NGO sector. Most managers, most field workers, are female. So you see role models in very many fields for the people. So aspiration is coming from the changes happening within the country as well as the international exposure that the country is going through. The mass media brings messages from one country to the other in a second. What is happening in America now you can see it right within a second on television. So within-country change, within-country models, as well as international exposure, international experience, creates a sense of future direction for the country.

McFarlane So you see that media as positive?

Alauddin There are negatives also, but the positive things are inspiring. So I would say that country is not static in terms of economic and social changes. Country is changing, along with the changes in family planning. So because people have aspiration, they are adopting changes, not only for family planning, but also about changing in other aspect of life. There are innovations in every culture. We have high yield variety introduced in the country. And new varieties are coming year after year. We have new crafts coming into every culture. We did not have zucchini in Bangladesh. We have that vegetable—

McFarlane Oh!

Alauddin —which is grown in America.

McFarlane Interesting.

Alauddin You know? We did not have broccoli. We have broccoli in the market now. So those are our examples of changes happening in the society. And those changes, along with changes in family planning, I think, is the motivating force, is the inspirational force for our society.

McFarlane You've been very modest about what you can teach people in other countries, but are you planning to do more training or more writing?

Alauddin I am planning to do writing. I don't know whether I'll be in a position to train more people. In the immediate future, I'm planning to host a group of ten to twelve people from Nigeria. These are religious leaders. They are imams, religious preachers. They would be coming to Bangladesh, and I would like to spend time with them, about a week. That is an immediate opportunity that I see coming up. Now that I don't have access to resources that I had before, through USAID funding—I am not heading the USAID-funded program in Bangladesh now. I have only access to small funding through this anonymous donor. If there are opportunities and there are funds available for those who would be willing to come to Bangladesh and would be willing to spend some money for managing the training here in Dhaka, I'd be willing to spare my time, even volunteer some of my time to contribute to development towards this field, internationally.

McFarlane I guess in kind of wrapping up—

Alauddin Deborah, I want to make a point about international exposure, mass media—

McFarlane Okay.

Alauddin —whether all of it is good or there are negative sides of it. I think I want to

make a point on this. Not all of it is good. There are some television programs which are impinging on our values, social values and are not really desirable.

McFarlane Can you describe—

Alauddin For example, movies that show violence, you know, are not good because that inspires young people to behave like leader. Spiderman, for example. You want to be Spiderman. What is the popular movie that we used to see in America—a girl, you know, was a leader and did all kinds of tricky stuff. There are three girls, you know.

McFarlane I don't watch television.

Alauddin You don't watch television. Spiderwoman, or something like that.

McFarlane *Charlie's Angels*?

Alauddin *Charlie's Angels* is one example. Well, violence, for example. Then, showing terrorist act in television.

McFarlane You mean the news.

Alauddin News.

McFarlane Yeah. (laughter)

Alauddin Those are, I think, not really good for all culture. Those are bad stuff. I think there should be control on that.

McFarlane That's a tricky one, isn't it?

Alauddin Yeah.

McFarlane How about the inequities people see? I mean, most of the television in the U.S. shows people—unfortunately, it's exported—shows people that are much wealthier than the average American.

Alauddin You see, I think international community is becoming increasingly sensitive to this issue. A couple of days ago, we had—I had gone to a two-day workshop here in Dhaka. And this workshop was organized by the government of Bangladesh and UNFPA and the World Bank. And the agenda was how to make the reproductive health program pro-poor. How to target the poor, how to target resources for the poor, and how to manage programs for the poor, so that the gap is reduced. And the presenters are showing that the first quintile of the population who are rich, compared to the fifth [quintile], they are better off in many indicators than the poorest. So you have disparity. You have a big gap between the first quintile and the fifth quintile.

McFarlane Within this country or worldwide?

Alauddin Worldwide. Within country as well as internationally. Across countries and within countries. There are variations, there are gaps. I think it was the agriculture secretary or secretary of treasury in the U.S., I read in the newspaper, he was making a comment why World Bank, IMF staff need to have so much of high salary, need to have first-class air travel wherever they go. And do they work twenty-four hours? Are their work hours the same as average work, average job? So he was pointing out the disparity in benefits, disparity in income, between institutions. So you have disparity of benefits between the countries, within the countries. And again, I think the television, the news media, is making it more conspicuous to people. And this is, to my understanding, this is one of the factors that generates anger. And anger has been demonstrated in very many forms, in very many shapes. The most

recent one was Cancun conference, where I think a South Korean woman killed herself at the conference campus, on the issue of, if I remember correctly, subsidies to agriculture. Remember that?

So if the disparity issue is not addressed, the anger, world anger, will continue, and all types of expression—terrorism, self-killing, suicide—all those will increase, some in protest, some in sort of simply submitting to the problem. I think this is going to be the key agenda for the world community, internationally and within the nation. It could be as simple as denying health. It could be income. It could be education. Any field, you will find that there is difference in terms of benefits, in terms of excess, in terms of opportunities. And this difference, unless it is minimized, and [unless] the basic need [are addressed] and opportunities are created for improving the condition of the people, I think the problem of terrorism, the problem of one country dominating another, one group dominating another group, will continue.

McFarlane This sounds fairly pessimistic.

Alauddin It is. I mean, the world is moving towards pessimism.

McFarlane Now, are you still affiliated with Pathfinder?

Alauddin I am still the country representative on a part-time basis. On a sort of lower, low-key—

McFarlane And you're focusing on the rural areas.

Alauddin I'm focusing on rural areas.

McFarlane In kind of wrapping up where you've been so far, in terms of your career, can you say what your most difficult task has been, looking back?

Alauddin To me, I think the most difficult task was—in general, I’ve said this before. I think the difficult task is changing the mind-set. You are set to thinking in certain way and thinking that there is no option. I think somehow our mental make-up, our growth, personality growth, our thinking process, is shaped by and constrained by the shaping of the mental make-up by the society, by school, by institutions. You are emotionally geared to thinking in one way. There are second options, there are third options, fourth options. I think we don’t really explore all options and put them on the table and make choices. I think that’s a constraint that’s the most difficult part.

McFarlane Do you have an example of that for yourself?

Alauddin Difficult question in terms of example.

McFarlane We can skip it.

Alauddin No, I think—let me struggle on this.

McFarlane Okay.

Alauddin Let me try to bring an example on this. Let’s take, for example, this equity question. Now we are obsessed by the idea. Let me put it this way. There are times when people become obsessed with one idea, right? We are obsessed with family planning.

McFarlane Um-hm.

Alauddin Definitely we are obsessed. Otherwise—if we are not obsessed, if we are not fully committed to it, you cannot make it a success. Take, for example, equity. Perhaps we are obsessed with this idea. Maybe equity in all cases, for all societies, is not good. There may be some variances to the ideal. But how to manage that variance? How to bring equilibrium into—what is the

opposite word for equilibrium?

McFarlane Disequilibrium? (Laughter)

Alauddin Disequilibrium, right? How to bring balances, yet keeping the imbalances intact.

Tape 6, side 1, ends; side 2 begins.

To match everything to an average. You know?

McFarlane Um-hm.

Alauddin You cannot explain an average without variances. So you'll have variances. At the same time variances have to be small, very, very small, should not exactly—all averages should be average but variances should be small. For smaller variances you need options to think through. So finding out those options, to me, was the most difficult part. So even for dealing with this equity issue, this addressing the issue of the poor, addressing the issue of the marginals, issue of the subgroups, those who do not follow the mainstream—we need to think of very many options how to bring them, maybe not entirely into the mainstream, but they should be part of the mainstream. And they should be feeling that they are part of the mainstream. Their self-esteem should be developed such that they feel they're important, they're respected, they have equal opportunity, they have the same benefits others are getting. That feeling, that kind of esteem, that kind of mental feeling should be there in all citizens within a country and also internationally.

McFarlane So it's back to the social worker, isn't it?

Alauddin Back to the social worker, yeah.

McFarlane So far—your career isn't over—what's been the most rewarding? Could you point to one aspect of your career, one accomplishment that you would say, That's it.

Alauddin I think if I sum up my accomplishment in theoretical terms, I would say that my experience in steering social change in the demographic field has been most rewarding.

McFarlane Did you think you would do this much?

Alauddin I did not really envision that I would do this much. But this makes my point all the more pertinent that, given my background, where I came from—came from a family background where I didn't have the opportunity of a silver spoon—the success, the contribution that I have made, the success that I feel part of, has happened because of the opportunity I got to work, the opportunity I got to contribute.

McFarlane There was [something] you said off tape about you're not in charge of this religious, philosophical—

Alauddin Right. I said that I was not in charge. It reconfirms what I'm saying now, because—(pause in recording)

McFarlane Yeah.

Alauddin If I take another person who is my peer, who is born in a privileged family, and compare his performance and my performance, his achievement and my achievement, I would think that—because I did not design myself, because Allah designed myself—my contribution has been far more significant, far more far-reaching than the other person of my age, because his or hers would come naturally. And I had to plow. And I had to be guided. I had to

be designed, right?

McFarlane Be designed.

Alauddin So that's how I would say that.

McFarlane And the design comes from where?

Alauddin The design comes from Allah.

McFarlane This project is called Population Pioneers. And we're interviewing people who have been responsible for some of the greatest social change ever, I think, without exaggeration. What do you have to say to people in the future that read the transcript or listen to the tapes a hundred years from now? What advice do you have for them in terms of family planning, population, or social change? We can turn the tape off for a minute if—

Alauddin I have not really thought that far—what would I say to the generation coming a hundred years from now.

McFarlane Let's say ten years from now.

Alauddin Well, I think the message that comes immediately to my mind is that humanity, human values should be the prime guiding factor. The world is progressing faster in science, in technology, and there is—I heard a saying. One of my relatives said this, that the finer the civilization becomes, the closer the bathroom comes to the bedroom.

McFarlane Interesting. (laughter)

Alauddin You know? The analogy he was giving was that we become more individualistic. I don't wish that kind of civilization for future generations, either coming next year or ten years after or hundred years from now. My vision is that humanity should be guided by the human principle, that there

will be caring for each other, there is respect for each other, there will be concern for each other. And there will be mutuality in roles and responsibilities between sexes. Not that we would have same roles, you know, man would have same role as female and female have man's role. We have our respective place for ourselves. Whatever our roles are should be mutually respectful, mutually rewarding, mutually gainful. So that's what I envision. And I think life would be far more comfortable, because science and technology would be helping, generating benefits, resources, shaping institutions, more favorable to human comfort.

McFarlane So you end up optimistic.

Alauddin I think I'm optimistic.

McFarlane Is there anything else you'd like to say to people in family planning or population in the future, or now?

Alauddin You know, population concern came from a concern of imbalance between resources and human numbers. And that concern still exists. And at the same time, I think we have not given attention, adequate attention, I would say, to improve the condition of the countries where we have population problems. We have paid attention to fertility reduction. You know, as I mentioned it before to you, I think it's in the record, that we have promised certain values for family planning, for fertility control, and that promise is lagging behind the fertility reduction. I think it is time now for us that we pay more attention on catching up with the lag that we have created between the aspiration and what has happened in terms of reality, in terms of changing. We have changed faster in fertility. We have not changed at the same level in

economic condition. We have not created the jobs at the same rate that we have reduced fertility. We have promised that if a family has two children, they would have better education, better jobs, and even mother would have time to relax and rest for herself, maybe a job or volunteer work. But we have not created that opportunity for the family, for the children. So there is a lack. And I think that we could do far better, as we are planning internationally to [advance] the fertility agenda, on other aspects as well. I think we are learning. Now we see that. Again, it has been (unclear) the international community, even in fertility field, reproductive field, that concerned people see that as an agenda, that you need to narrow the gap between poor and the rich and also you need to come up with development agenda, far more aggressively than we have pursued it. Because fertility reduction can take you [only so] far. If you want to go beyond that, if you want to exceed what family planning can do and go beyond, you need to focus on development, on very many aspects of life. So that is being recognized, you know. It has been recognized in Cairo, in international conference, and it is becoming more and more obvious for Bangladesh, I would say. We have achieved fertility reduction, we have reduced to a half, from 6.6 to 3.3. But it has happened about seven to eight years ago. In '92, '93, we have achieved that level and till now, we were steady on that level, the reason being that maybe we have come to a limited point of family planning. We need to pay attention to other development factors in order to complement and contribute to pushing the family planning farther. So there is a dynamism, an interaction happening between development and family

planning, to speed up the process of further reduction in fertility.

McFarlane We're back to your dissertation, aren't we?

Alauddin You know? Back to my dissertation.

McFarlane Yeah. Is there anything else I should know or you'd like to add?

Alauddin Let me think if I can add anything.

McFarlane Do you want me to—(pause in recording)

Alauddin I want to pay regards to my parents, in particular. One lesson my dad taught me once, he said, "Never consider that you are working for somebody else. Whatever work comes to you, it is your own work." He was suggesting that if you consider that you are working for somebody else, you may not fully commit yourself. You may not do your best. So he was giving me the message that whatever work you are doing, do it at your best effort. And I have tried to remember that throughout my life. And I have, wherever I was, whatever work I was [doing], I have tried to my utmost effort to do it the best. That's one thing that I want to record.

The second is my own family. My wife, my children, have given me the opportunity to fully commit myself to work, because my children were very understanding. When I came home late in the evening, my elder daughter—I have two daughters, both of them would come to the door, open the door, and would say, May we introduce ourselves to you, Sir? (laughter) So those welcoming remarks, from my daughters, little daughters, made me very happy—that they were welcoming me home. And they were letting me work longer hours. So I want to make special [thanks] to my wife, to my three children, for all that I have done and I could do. So that's how I want to end.

McFarlane Okay.

end of interview