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Social Security Program for the Bede Community: Savar Upazila Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Bede, also known as Baidya (feminine: Bedeni) or Manta, are a nomadic Indo-Aryan people of Bangladesh who have been neglected and backward since ages. To bring them into the mainstream of the society and for the overall development of the country, it is very important to preserve the basic rights of these neglected and backward groups by ensuring social justice, developed socio-economic conditions, proper educational system, permanent habitation, proper health services and all the social security programs supported by the government. To improve the quality of life of the Bede community, the government of Bangladesh has introduced a unique program called "Livelihood Development Program for Bede Community". The main objective of this study is to be informed to what extent this government supported program is effective for the Bede community. Mixed method is used in this exploratory study. Here, Survey method is conducted for quantitative data, Case study and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is used for qualitative data. Quantitative data has been collected from 100 selected Bede people through purposive sampling from the Bede community who resides in Savar Upazila of Dhaka district where the Department of Social Services is running the government program for them. Among the surveyed population, a maximum of 40% Bede are between 30-40 years of age, and 50% of them are illiterate. But 20% of Bede have educational qualifications at the primary level. Under this program, the Government provides Allowance for them. 40% Bede received their first allowance in the 2015-16 financial year, while 66% Bede people used the allowance money for medical purposes and 40% Bede expressed satisfaction with receiving the allowance. Government also introduced the Education Stipend for Bede students. 40% of Bede students have received educational opportunities through this stipend and they are very satisfied. 33% of the surveyed Bede people received training on beautification and they are satisfied. Government also provides post training grants for their self-establishment.

INTRODUCTION

The Bede community is a small part of the total population of Bangladesh. Bede resembles European nomads. According to typical information, "In 1638, after coming to this country with King Ballal Sen of Arakan, Bede established their first settlement at Bikrampur in Munshiganj district. Later they spread from there to the remote areas of Bangladesh, West Bengal and Assam in India". People of Bede community are found in Bogra, Pabna, Mymensingh, Bakerganj and Noakhali in Bangladesh. Savar, Munshiganj, Sunamganj, Joydevpur of Gazipur, Hathazari of Chittagong, Mirsrai, Tunturi, Chouddagram of Comilla, Chandina, Enayetganj, Sonagazi of Feni and various places of North Bengal are also known as the abode of Bede community. "The original name of the Bede is Mantang. The name Bede is derived from the pejorative Baidya (hammered doctor), modified 'Baidya' (physician). Since most of the Bede are concerned with medicine. The Bede are an expatriate section of the Mantang tribal tribe of Arakan State. So, they are more interested in identifying themselves as Mantang. Bede are very skilled in fighting and hunting. Their complexion and shape are similar to Bengalis".

This community has been abandoned and underdeveloped since time immemorial. Bede are known as "water nomads" or "river nomads" as they traditionally live, travel and earn

their living in rivers. They are victims of discrimination socially and economically. However, they are involved with some essential professions of the society. Though all citizens are equal and all of them are entitled to the same facilities, the Bede appear to be victims of familial, social and economic discrimination. It is the responsibility of the family, society, state and everyone to treat them kindly and try to establish their rightful basic rights. Now it has become very important to protect the basic rights of the neglected and backward people. For the betterment of the society and for the overall development of the country it is necessary to ensure social justice for them. Measures should be taken to upgrade their family status, socio-economic condition. Educational systems and health services should be developed to bring them into the mainstream of society and they should involve them into the overall development of the country. Therefore, the government has taken steps to formulate and implement an up-to-date policy with the aim of implementing the life improvement program of the Bede community under the social security program.

Bede is a marginalized group of people. They are also socially neglected. Except during elections, representatives do not have time to think about this neglected population. There are about eight lakh Bede in Bangladesh. They travel in groups and never stay in one place for more than

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a few months. About 98% of Bede live below the poverty line and about 95% of Bede children do not attend school. Historically the Bede could not vote. Because they did not have a permanent residence, for the same reason they could not apply for bank loans or micro-loans. At present the government has given them the right of vote. Government has run social security programs. Under this Social Security programs government has introduced education stipend for Bede students as 90 percent of the Bede are illiterate, Allowances are provided for more vulnerable Bede. Post-training rehabilitation activity has also been introduced.

According to a survey by the Department of Social Services, the Bede community in Bangladesh is about 75,000. The current government has undertaken various activities to improve the quality of life of the Bede community and to integrate this community into the mainstream of society. From the financial year 2012-13 to 2018-19, the two programs for improving the “Livelihood Development Program for Bede and Backward communities” were together. In the financial year 2019-20, the Livelihood Development Program for Bede is being separated and is being run as an independent program. Thus the Bede working people above 18 years of age are being identified and reintegrated into the society by providing skill development training based on local needs through the Department of Social Services/ selected NGOs. The purpose of skill development training is to engage the target Bede people in income generation to improve their quality of life and make them self-reliant. By following the training module provided by the government, DSS and selected service provider NGOs or institutions give 3 (three) months of basic skill development training, 1 (one) week of formal psychosocial counseling and awareness raising basic training and 5 (five) days of refresher training to the targeted people of Bede community.

From the fiscal year 2012-2013, 7 districts of the country were included as a pilot program. In the financial year 2012-13, the allocation was 66,00,000 (sixty six lakhs Taka). The program was expanded and implemented in a total of 21 districts, including 14 new districts in the financial year 2013-2014. The districts are Dhaka, Narayanganj, Munshiganj, Gopalganj, Faridpur, Sherpur, Tangail, Chittagong, Noakhali, Brahmanbaria, Comilla, Pabna, Naogaon, Dinajpur, Nilphamari, Jashore, Kushtia, Barisal, Bhola, Patuakhali and Habiganj. BDT 7,96,98,000.00 (Seven Crore Ninety Six Lacs Ninety Eight Thousand) was allocated for this program in the financial year 2013-14. This program has been implemented in the previous 21 districts in the financial year 2014-15. In the financial year 2014-15, the amount allocated was BDT 9,22,94,000.00 In the financial year 2015-16, this program was implemented in 64 districts by expanding this program to new 43 districts including the previous 21 districts. The amount of money allocated in the financial year 2015-16 was 18 (eighteen) crores.

The amount of money allocated in the financial year 2016-17 is BDT 20 crore 30 lacs. The amount of money

allocated in the financial year 2017-18 is BDT 27 crore. The amount of money allocated in the financial year 2018-19 is BDT 50 crores 03 lacs. In the fiscal year 2019-20, this program was separated and named the “Livelihood Development Program of the Bede Community”. BDT 9 crore 23 lacs. have been allocated in the financial year 2019-20 for the improvement of living standards of the Bede community. BDT 9 crore 23 lacs. have been allocated in the financial year 2020-2021 for the improvement of living standards of the Bede community. The allocation for the program in the financial year 2021-2022 was BDT 9 crore 23 lacs. BDT 500.00 (Five Hundreds) per month is provided as Special Old Age Allowance. BDT 700.00 (Seven Hundreds) is being provided for the primary level, BDT 800.00 (Eight Hundreds). for Secondary Level, BDT 1000.00 (One Thousand). for Higher Secondary level and BDT 1,200.00 for Higher Education (One Thousand and Two Hundred) for higher levels are being paid to the students of Bede as education stipend. Trade based training is provided to the working youth above 18 years of age. The trainees are provided with non-refundable financial assistance after the training.

In the financial year 2022-2023, the allocation was BDT 9 crore 23 lacs. The deprived, helpless and disenfranchised Bede community survives by selling amulets, charms, magic and snake play who build temporary abodes like guest birds on roadsides, empty fields or abandoned land, paddy fields, roadsides, school grounds, railway lines or river banks. They have no education, no special qualifications for work. Although there is no class distinction in Bangladeshi society, Bede people are seen with different eyes. So, it is not very easy for them to come forward in the mainstream of society. Bede has been following the customs of Kaum Samaj since the beginning. They follow the tribal way of life and social relations. Each Bede family has its own boat. A team is made up of several boats. And each fleet consists of several groups. Each fleet has a captain. The rules of the fleet, the trade routes and areas of each party were determined by the chieftain. Money or special gifts have to be given to the Sardar on marriages and other festivals. The Bede community also has sub-tribal and tribal chiefs. A number of Bede are still associated with community-based professions. Despite that, the Bede community, the country's only nomadic people, are living in misery. It is high time to bring the Bede community under various long standing projects. They should be assisted by ensuring new livelihoods and civil rights where their own identity and heritage will be preserved as well.

According to the Ministry of Social Welfare, Bede is divided into eight tribal groups. These tribes are Malbede, Sapuria, Bajikar, Sandar, Tola, Mirshikari, Burial Sanda and Gain Bede. The Bede usually meet together in Munshiganj or Chittagong between the 5th of Kartik month and the 15th of Agrayayana. Then the leaders of all fleets together elect the tribal chief. Bede tribalism is very strong. They are still in touch with each other across the country. In this study, the socio-economic, demographic

and cultural status of the Bede community, their pre-service and current poverty status, their education and how their life is shaped by the social security program of DSS all are investigated and probable solutions of this problem will be presented.

Objectives of the Study

Main Objective

To what extent Social security programs play a pivotal role in the development of the Bede community.

Special Purposes

1. To identify the socio-economic, demographic and cultural status of the Bede community;
2. Collect information on poverty condition before and after receiving the services of DSS;
3. To know how social security programs influence on their education, health, housing and decision-making;
4. To recognize their (Bede community) feelings on the merits and demerits of social security programs conducted by the Department of Social Services; and
5. Identifying their difficulties and finding their observations on solving their issues.

Operational Definitions Related to Study

Bede Community

The Bede community is a small and ethnic community in Bangladesh belonging to the Indo-Aryan community. They are also known as Manta. The Bede traditionally live on rivers and travel through the river. For this they are known as “water nomads” or “river nomads”. Basically, Bede are similar to European nomads. They travel in groups and never stay in one place for more than a few months. They mainly live on boats and make a living through petty trading. These communities are divided into 8 tribes namely Malbede, Sapuria, Bajikar, Sandar, Tola, Mirshikari, Burial, Sanda and Gain Bede. Although the main occupation is small business, horn planting, sale of amulets and charms, snake playing, snake bite treatment, snake sale, spiritual health services, herbal medicine sale, Kabiraji, monkey show, bangle ribbon sale, magic show etc. These are their means of livelihood. About 98% of Bede live below the poverty line and about 95% of Bede children do not attend school. Historically, the Bede could not vote because they did not have permanent residence, for the same reason they could not apply for bank loans or microcredit. Bangladesh has about eight lakh Bede.

Social Security Programs

Social security is a safety net program through which special benefits are given to the helpless and backward people of the society. It is only a part of the overall social security system or programs of a country. Social safety net is built in each country according to the needs of its people. Social security has been recognized as a human right in the constitution of Bangladesh. In this Constitution (Fifteenth Amendment 2011 Article 15(d) Basic Needs System) defines social security as: ‘The right

to social security i.e. to receive government assistance in the event of indigency due to uncontrollable causes such as unemployment, sickness or disability or widowhood, parentlessness or old age or similar circumstances’.

Social protection, as defined by the United Nations Institute for Social Development Research, refers to all activities and actions related to the prevention, management and transition from situations that adversely affect the well-being of people in society. Generally speaking, social security is the economic protection program adopted to deal with sudden disasters like occupational accidents, premature death, sickness, unemployment, old age dependency etc. in modern industrial society. The Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh has earmarked BDT 126,272 crore in the budget for the fiscal year 2023-24 for social security programs. Which is 16.58% of the total budget.

Department of Social Services

The Department of Social Services (DSS) is an important department under the Ministry of Social Welfare, of the Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh. The Department of Social Services was established in 1961. Social security related programs are conducted in Bangladesh through this Department. At present, the Department of Social Services is conducting a wide range of programs to improve the quality of life of the neglected and backward people. The services which are provided by this department also bring the people who are lagging behind in the mainstream of the society.

METHODOLOGY

The study is exploratory in nature. Its main method is mixed method. Quantitative and qualitative methods were applied in this study. Survey method is followed for quantitative data. From July 2022 to August 2022 in Savar Upazila of Dhaka District, Surveys were conducted in Bede Palli. Case Study and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) also were conducted there. All Bede living in the Bede Palli of the upazila are the whole of this study and each selected Bede is the unit of analysis. Savar Upazila of Dhaka District under Dhaka Division is considered as the area of this study. Numerical data was collected from 100 people from the Bede community who are receiving social security services provided by the Department of Social Services (DSS). Survey was conducted among 100 selected people. In this case, data was collected from 50 Bede elderly people receiving allowance, 25 Bede youth receiving training on driving, tailoring, beautification and computer training and 15 students who are receiving education stipend and parents of 10 students. They are selected by using a purposive sampling method. The source of data is that all the Bede people benefited from the DSS. Data is collected from primary sources. Therefore, data are collected through direct interviews of the Bede people. Data were collected from the respondents using standardized interview schedules. Pre-testing was done to make the interview

schedule more useful for collecting qualitative data using the interview schedule. The interview schedule is open-ended (comprehensive) and closed-ended. Questions are inserted in this way. Case studies and FGDs are conducted for qualitative data collection. For the study, documents are collected from internet and public-private institutions, research institutes and libraries. Interview schedule is used for quantitative data. The interview schedule is prepared in an open and closed way for quantitative and qualitative data. Categorization and tabulation are done to present quantitative data. Required number of one-way, two-way or multi-way tables and figures are prepared. For quantitative data analysis—Statistical methods especially arithmetic mean and co-correlation methods are used.

Findings of the Study

Data collected through surveys on their Socio-economic development, their poverty status, their condition before and after receiving the services of DSS and how social security programs influence on their education, health, housing and decision-making. Data collected also on the problems of the social security programs and found their opinion on solving the issues. 100 beneficiaries of social security programs are selected for numerical data

collection. Among the 100 people 50 beneficiaries have got allowance provided by DSS, 25 beneficiaries have got education stipend and 25 beneficiaries have got training on different trades such as driving, computer training, tailoring and beautification. They have got post-training grants also. Following are the results of the survey conducted for quantitative data:

Findings from Quantitative Data

Quantitative data have been collected through a survey method that was conducted by following a questionnaire within 100 people from the Bede community. Data has been collected from July 2022 to October 2022. Findings of the quantitative data are discussed below:

Socio-Demographic Condition of the Bede Community

This section deals with the socio-demographic condition of the Bede community. The findings of the study are discussed below:

Age of the Respondents

The total number of the respondents is 100; all of them are from Bede community. The age of the respondents is between the ages of 21 to 61 and above years.

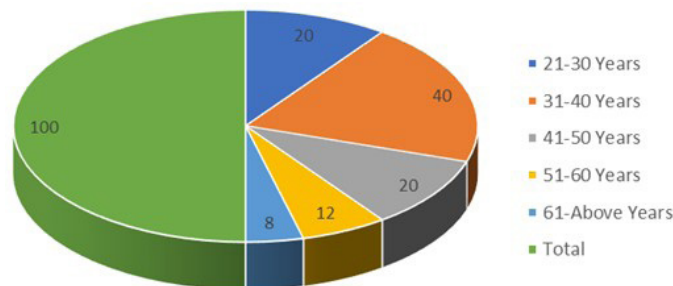


Figure 1: Age of the respondents

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Demographic and socio-economic status of the Bede community is presented in chart-1. Among the 100 beneficiaries of the social security program of Bede community of Savar upazila, a maximum 40% of Bede are between 31-40 years, 20% are between 21-30 years, 12% of Bede are between 51-60 years while only 8% of

Bede are between 61 and Above years.

Educational Qualification

The total number of the respondents is 100; all of them are from Bede community. The age of the educational qualification is between the ages of 21 to 61 years.

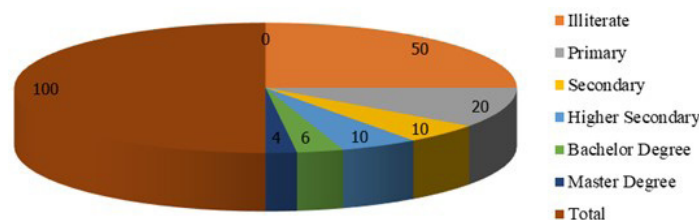


Figure 2: Educational qualification

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

The Chart-2 presents the information on educational qualification of the selected Bede people. 50% of them are illiterate, 20% of the Bede population have primary educational qualifications, 10% of the Bede population

have higher secondary educational qualifications. But, 06% of the Bede population have completed graduation, while 04% of the Bede population have completed post-graduation.

Occupational Status of the Bede Community

Chart-3 presents the information about the occupational status of the Bede population. 74% of them do work which they learn from their community such as selling

amulets, charms, magic and snake play. It is also called communal work or community job. Only 10% of them are students who study in Savar Upazila. But only 4% work and 12% do business.

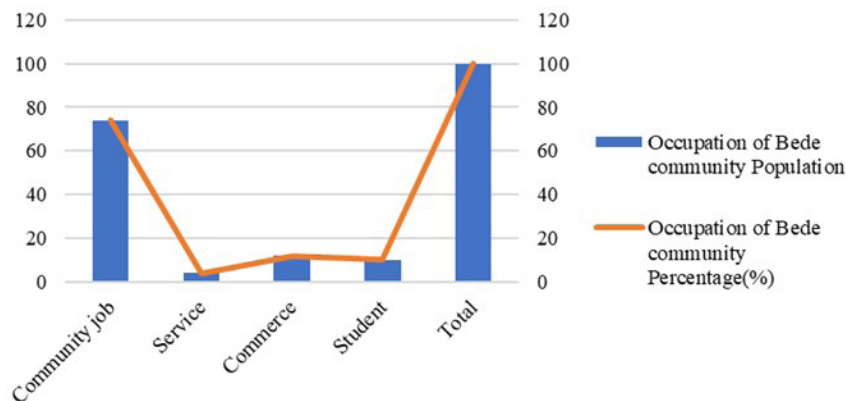


Figure 3: Occupational status of the Bede community
Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Religious Views of the Bede Community

Chart-4 presents the information about their religion. Out of 100 Bede in Savar Upazila 90% Bede are Muslim,

while 10% Bede belongs to Hinduism. Except these religions there is no other belongingness found regarding religion during the survey.

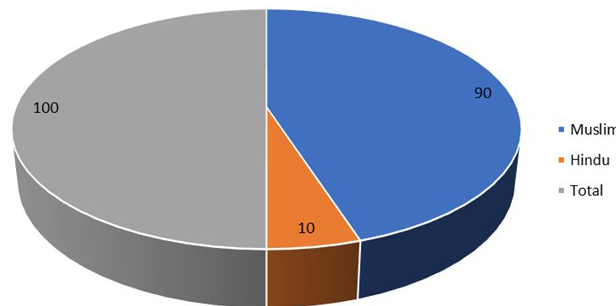


Figure 4: Religious views of the Bede community
Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Habitation of Bede Community

Chart-5 shows the habitat of the Bede community. 50% Bede of Savar upazila live in brick built houses, while 46% of the population live in tin houses. On the other

hand 4% of the population live in mud houses. Out of 100 Bede surveyed in Savar Upazila, 100 have established their permanent settlements in Savar Upazila. So they live here permanently.

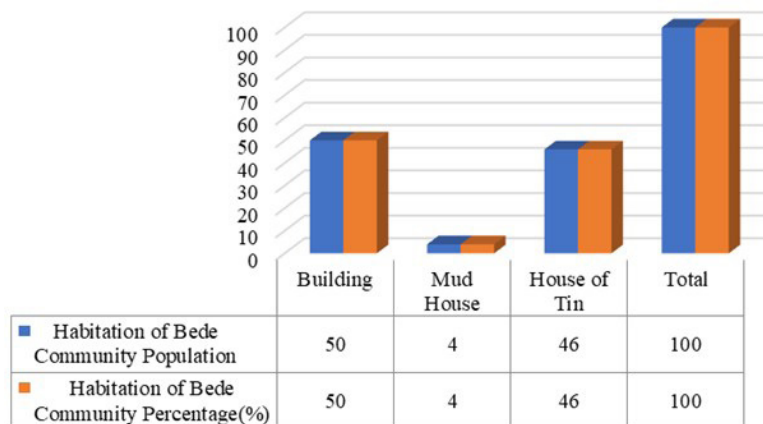


Figure 5: Habitation of Bede community
Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Allowance Related Information of the Bede community

During the study in Savar Upazila under Dhaka District, 50 Bede beneficiaries who are getting allowance provided by DSS were selected to collect numerical data. Their opinions and recommendations were also collected from them regarding the allowance program received by them. The information obtained is as follows:

Starting Time of Getting Allowance

Chart-6 shows the information related to the allowances provided by the Department of Social Services. In Savar upazila, 40% of Bede received their first allowance in the 2015-2016 fiscal year, 30% of Bede received their first allowance in the fiscal year 2017-2018, 30% of Bede received their first allowance in the fiscal year 2017-2018.

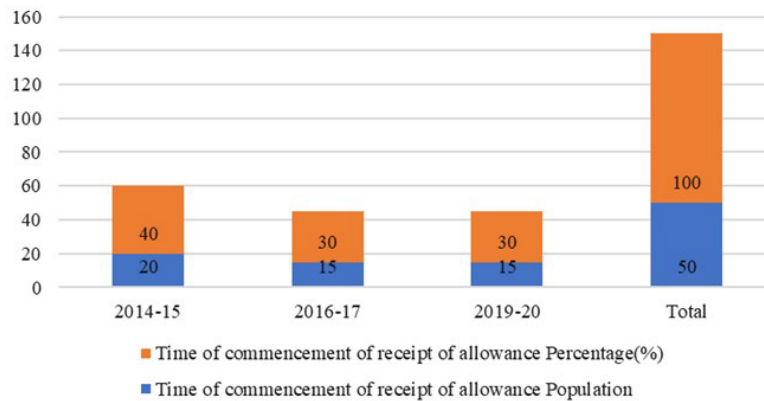


Figure 6: Starting time of getting allowance

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Expenses of Money Which they Get as Allowance

Chart-7 shows the information related to the expenses of money they get as allowance by the Department of

Social Services. 66% of the surveyed people spend their allowance money on medical treatment, 17% spend their allowance money on food and clothing.

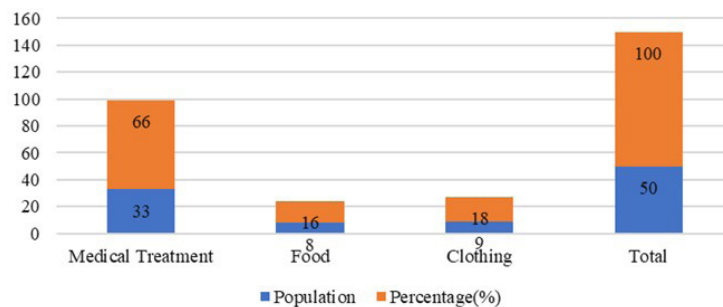


Figure 7: Expenses of money which they get as allowance

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Financial Status of the Bede People before Getting Allowance

In chart-8, it has been highlighted the status of Bede people before getting the allowance provided by the Department of Social Services. 60% of the Bede

population stated that their financial condition was poor before receiving the allowance and 40% of the Bede population stated that their financial condition was good before receiving the allowance.

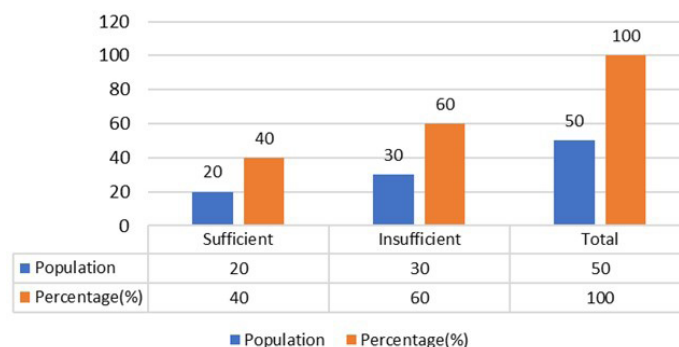


Figure 8: Financial status of the Bede people before getting allowance

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Impact on Livelihoods of the Bede People after Getting Allowance

Chart-9 shows the impact of allowance on the lives of beneficiaries provided by the Department of Social Services. Among the surveyed Bede of Savar Upazila,

20% Bede expressed a very positive effect on receiving allowance, 40% Bede expressed positive expression. 24% of Savar upazila have expressed negative attitude towards receiving allowance. 8% expressed an extremely negative impact on receiving allowance.

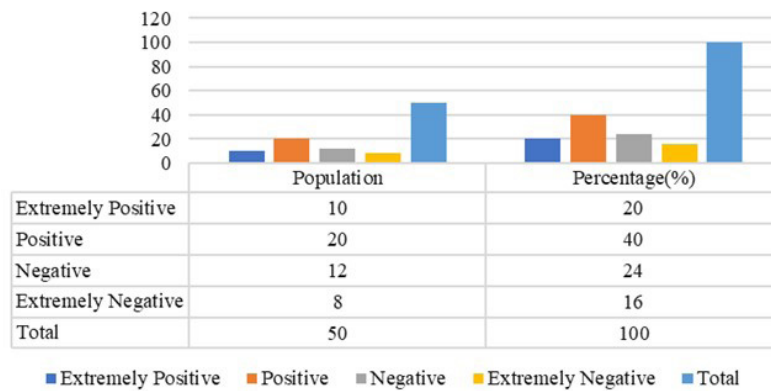


Figure 9: Impact on livelihoods of the bede people after getting allowance
Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Information Related to Education Stipend

Education stipend provided by the Department of Social Services is one of the best programs for Bede people. Data is collected from 25 students who get education stipend selected in Savar upazila. Their opinion regarding education stipend is also collected. The information obtained is as follows:

Table 1: Amount of education stipend received by Bede People

Amount of Education Stipend	Population	Percentage (%)
BDT 700.00	10	40
BDT 1000.00	05	20
BDT 1200.00	10	40
Total	25	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Amount of Education Stipend Received by the Bede People

Table-1 shows the information about the education stipend provided by the Department of Social Services. 40% Bede students get education stipend at the rate of BDT 700.00 per month. 20% students get the monthly education stipend at the rate of BDT 1,000.00, while 40% students get the education stipend at the rate of BDT 1,200.00 per month.

Starting Time of Receiving Education Stipend

Chart-10 shows the information related to the starting time of education stipend provided by the Department of Social Services. 40% of Bede students received first

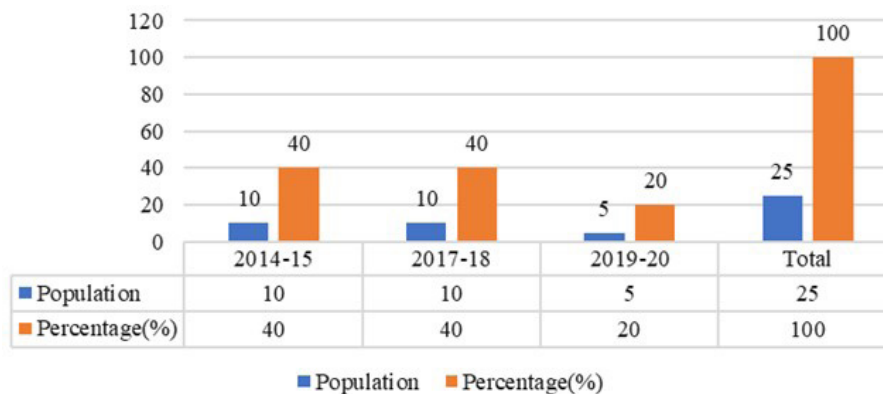


Figure 10: Starting time of receiving education stipend
Source: Fieldwork, 2022

education stipend in 2015-2016, while 40% students received first education stipend in 2017-2018 and 20% students received first education stipend in 2019-2020.

Knowing about Education Stipend

Table-2 shows the information about how the Bede students come to know about the education stipend

provided by the Department of Social Services. 40% Bede students learned about education stipend from the Bede community. On the other hand, 20% of Bede students

learned about education stipend from local government representatives and 40% of Bede students learned about education stipend from government officials.

Table 2: Knowing about Education Stipend

Know about education stipend	Population	Percentage (%)
Bede Community	10	40
Local Representative	5	20
Government Officials	10	40
Total	25	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Education Stipend Related Expenses

Chart-11 shows the information related to the expenses of education stipend provided by the Department of Social

Services. 50% of students use money from education stipend for medical purposes and 50% students use money from education stipend for purchasing clothes.

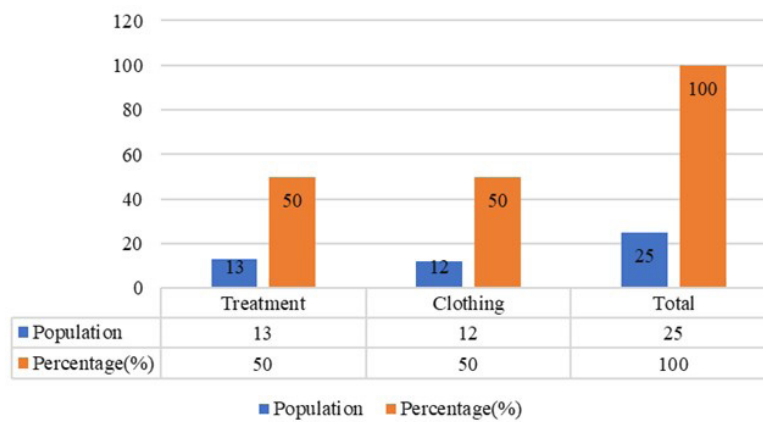


Figure 11: Education stipend related expenses

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Impact of Education Stipend on Livelihood of the Bede People

Table-3 shows the information related to the impact on livelihood of receiving education stipend provided by the Department of Social Services. 40% of the Bede students

of Savar Upazila expressed a very positive attitude towards receiving education stipend. 40% Bede students expressed positive attitude towards receiving education stipend. On the other hand, 20% of Bede students expressed a negative attitude on receiving the education stipend.

Table 3: Impact of Education Stipend on Livelihood of the Bede People

Impression of the Bede Community	Population	Percentage (%)
Extremely Positive	10	40
Positive	10	40
Extremely Negative	5	20
Total	25	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Effectiveness of Education Stipend for the Bede Community

Chart-12 presents the data on well-being of education stipends for the Bede community. Among the selected Bede students of Savar Upazila, 40% of the Bede students said that education opportunities have been created

through the education stipend. 20% of students said that education stipend has created employment opportunities. 20% of the Bede students said that education stipend has created opportunities of self-reliance and 20% of students said that education stipend has increased social status.

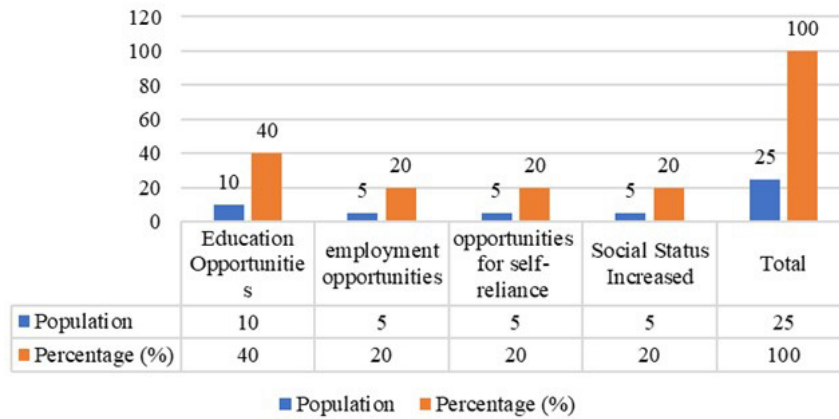


Figure 12: Effectiveness of education stipend for the Bede community

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Training Related Information

The Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh has adopted several social security programs for the Bede community. Out of all the social security programs training and post-training grant programs being implemented by the Department of Social Services. Among the selected 25 Bede who received training and post training grants, they give their opinions and recommendations regarding receiving training and post-training grants. The information obtained is as follows:

Type of Training Received by Bede Youth

Table-4 shows the information of selected Bede youth regarding the training and post-training grants provided by the Department of Social Services. 32% Bede youth received training on Beautification, 20% Bede youth received training on Tailoring, 20% Bede youth of Savar Upazila received training in Driving, and 28% of the Bede youth received training on Computer Education.

Table 4: Type of training received by Bede youth

Type of Training	Population	Percentage (%)
Beautification Training	8	32
Tailoring	5	20
Driving	5	20
Computer Training	7	28
Total	25	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Starting Period of Training

Chart-13 shows the information regarding the starting period of training provided by the Department of Social Services. 40% selected Bede youth of Savar

upazila started training in the fiscal year 2015-2016. 40% had started their training in the fiscal year 2017-2018. While 20% started training in the 2019-2020 financial year.

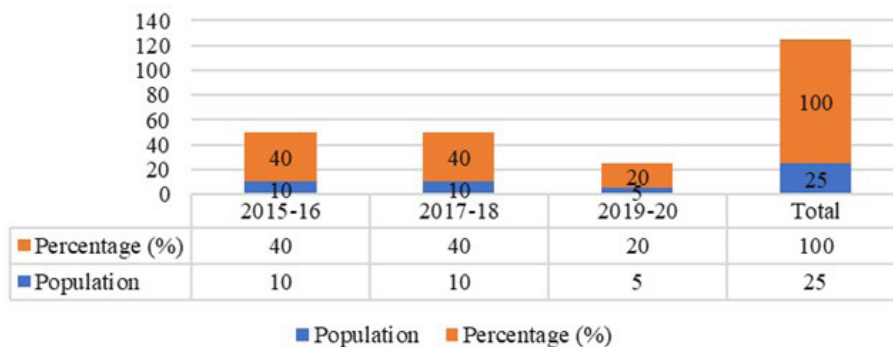


Figure 13: Starting period of training

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Skill Development by Training

Table-5 shows the information related to skill development by getting training provided by the

Department of Social Services. 100% of selected Bede of Savar Upazila have been trained and have been able to improve their skills.

Table 5: Skill development by training

Skill development by training	Population	Percentage (%)
Yes	25	100
No	0	0
Total	25	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Engagement in Income Generating Activities after being Trained

Chart-14 shows the information regarding training and post-training grants provided by the Department of Social

Services and are they able to themselves engage them in income generating activities. 100% of the trained Bede youth expressed that they could not engage themselves in any income generating activities after being trained.

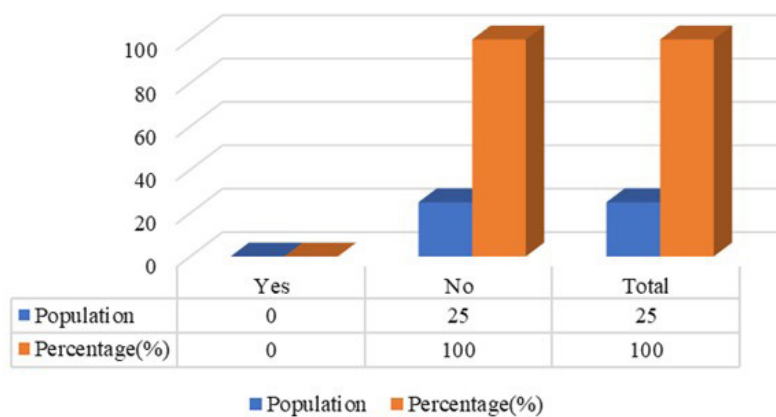


Figure 14: Engagement in income generating activities after being trained

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Post Training Grant

Table-6 shows the information regarding the training and post-training grants provided by the Department of Social Services. 100% of the Bede youth have been awarded post training grants.

Table 6: Post training grant

Receipt of grant after training	Population	Percentage (%)
Yes	25	100
No	0	0
Total	25	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Level of Satisfaction of the Bede Youth in Receiving Training

Chart-15 shows the information related to Bede youth's satisfaction regarding training and post-training grants provided by the Department of Social Services. 40% selected Bede youth of Savar Upazila expressed their satisfaction in receiving training. 27% were very satisfied with their training. However, 20% of Bede youth expressed dissatisfaction with being trained by DSS.

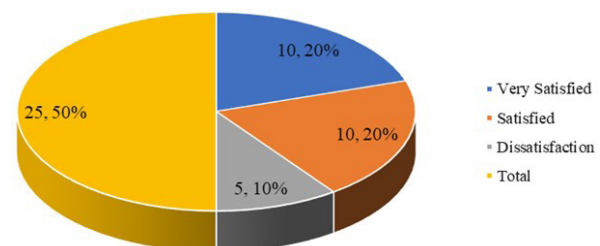


Figure 15: Level of satisfaction of the Bede youth in receiving training

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Findings from Qualitative Data

Mainly mixed method is applied in this study. Quantitative data have been collected by applying survey techniques and Qualitative data have been collected through 5 (Five) Case Study and 5 (Five) Focus Group Discussion conducted in Bede Palli. All Case Study and FGD held in Savar Upazila of Dhaka District. Among the conducted Case study four Case study and three FGDs as below:

Case Study

Case-1

Sabina (pseudonym), a member of the Bede community.

She is 63 years old, Muslim by religion who lives a communal life. She is currently living in Savar, Dhaka. Her family was poor and not financially well off. She could not study due to the financial condition of the family and she had to suffer for the negative social views and to be a member of the Bede community. Her father was the only earning member of the family and had to struggle a lot to meet the basic needs of the family. Including her, there were six members in her family. So she did not have the opportunity to pass the primary level. She read up to class two. She is always in tension about her life and her mental condition is not sound. She said, "I am currently suffering from various diseases. I have leg pain, chest pain, arm pain, knee pain, diabetes and cough. I am always in tension. How I manage my life and what I will do in the future. Now I am 63. I almost can't do anything. I along with the Bede community go for some community work and hardly manage my livelihood but when I will be older than I would not even go for our community work. It will be more difficult to lead life for me and my life will become uncertain". She is currently living in Savar, Dhaka. Which amount she earns by doing community work she manages house rents and fulfills her basic and other needs. In this context, she adds, "I currently live in a brick-built house near CRP road, Savar. Me and other Bede people have rented this house together. We earn through our community work and pay rent of the house. We all help each other in our every sorrow.

She is currently receiving the allowance provided by the Department of Social Services for 3 years. She usually uses this allowance money to buy her medicine. She can buy the medicines if she gets allowance money. But with this small amount of money, she can't manage her other needs. So, in this case their allowance should be increased. He said, "The allowance money is so small that I can't spend this money on anything other than buying medicine. So, my request to the government is to increase the amount of money from 500 taka to 2000 taka or more then it will be good for me. So that I can fulfill my other needs with this money".

She faces many problems in her daily life but a negative attitude towards them is very painful for them. People of the society can't treat them normally. People have a grudge against them. People of the society cannot accept their community members as normal human beings. Several times, the people of the society made many bad comments about them, insulted them and passed many harsh words. In order to improve the quality of life of the Bede people, they have to help themselves. In addition, we have to try to change ourselves and others. She added, "Give us various trainings, provide jobs. Provide opportunities for cattle rearing. Give us jobs such as gatekeeper or arrange any other jobs. And make arrangements of giving us free medical treatment in the hospital".

Case-2

Jonaki (pseudonym), aged approximately 36 years. She lived in a family with her Parents, brothers and sisters. She received computer training for 50 working days in

2019 under the social security programs provided by the Department of Social Services. She learned many types of computer work. She learned how to work with Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel. Learned Bengali language and English language typing. But unfortunately, after receiving training from the Department of Social Services She could not use her skills in any income generating activities. She could not set up any business shop or did not get any job in any computer company or any other organization later. After completing the training, she received a grant of 10,000 taka but could not use the money for any income-generating activities. She said, "I took computer training from the Department of Social Services in 2019. I learned many types of computer work by taking computer training from the social services department. I learned Bengali and English typing. I learned Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel but later I could not use my computer skills for any income generating activities. I did not get a job opportunity in any computer company. After completing the training, I was given a grant of 10 thousand taka but I could not use that money for any income-generating activities. Because, with the little amount of money, I could not buy the necessary materials to start any business. So, my request to the Bangladesh government is that to increase the amount of financial assistance after giving training or providing employment in some organization then we can live much better".

Case-3

Mannan Mia Mohini (pseudonym), a member of Bede community. He is 28 years old. A Muslim by religion lives on doing various jobs. He currently resides in Gopal Nagar. His family was poor and they were not well off financially. He could not continue his studies due to the financial crises of family. His father was the only earning member of the family. He had to struggle to meet the basic needs of the family of 7 members. He said, "I could not study far enough because I am a Bede member and everyone in the family is poor. We could not eat three meals in a day. So, how do I study? I studied till class IX". He is currently in mental distress. He is always worried about how to make a living, how to lead a life when he gets older.

He said, "I took training on hair cutting from the Department of Social Services, and received a grant of BDT 10,000.00 after completing the training. But the amount of grant is so little that I could not set up my own salon. Even I could not get any job cutting hair at any salon as after knowing my Bede identity no one would cut his hair from me. As a result, I lost my job opportunity. So, my request to the government is to increase the amount of financial grant for us after training or provide us employment in some institution or provide loan after training so that we can be self-reliant". He is currently living in Gopal Nagar. But the condition of the house is not very good. He lives in a house made of tin. He supports himself with the money that he earns through his community work.

Case-4

Kana (pseudonym), lives in Savar who is 27 years old and a Bede by birth. He is a Muslim by religion. After Studying up to higher-secondary level he began his small business. He has a family consisting of parents and sister. With the support of his family and the education stipend provided by the Department of Social Services, he was able to study up to the higher secondary level. The financial condition of the family is very poor. Kona said, "I didn't study after higher-secondary due to the financial crises of my family. I used to get an education stipend from the social services department but it was not as much as required. Currently doing small business I cannot manage my studies. So, studies are now closed. But I want to study, I want to do something in life. If the government increases the amount of education stipend, education will not be stopped due to lack of money. So many Bede students will be able to continue their studies".

He is not mentally well off rather he is in tension. Besides the financial expenses of the family, his father's physical illness, and house rent create a mental pressure on him. He always thinks about how to manage all these with his small income. He added, "my father gets the allowance provided by the Department of Social Services but it is not as much as it needed. We have to rent a house to live in. In many respects people don't want to rent a house to us. So, my request to the government is to take a housing project for us or arrange a house reservation for us in a shelter home project so that we can lead a better life. If the amount of allowance is increased, at least I will be able to buy medicine" They have to live by hearing various negative words of the people of the society. He worries about many things. He said that there is always a mental anxiety. He is doing small business. Not all expenses are covered by his earnings from the business. He adds "If I get seriously ill, then how will I meet the medical expenses, there is no possibility of a job as I can't finish my study". He again said "If the government takes any loan program for us then I can do my business well with loans as it will help me to increase my capital". He thinks if the government of Bangladesh increases the amount of allowance and if they are accommodated, they can lead a much better life.

Focus Group Discussion

Five FGDs have been conducted in the Bede Palli. Each group consists of ten members. One representative from Local government, one representative from the media, one representative from NGO, one representative from civil society, Social Services officer of Savar Upazila, Union Social Worker who is related to implement the social security program for Bede community and four members from Bede Community were present there. Every group discusses the socio-economic status of the Bede community as well as the effects of the social security program implemented by DSS. They also discuss the problems faced by the Bede community. They find some probable solutions and some challenges regarding the solutions.

FGD-1

FGD-1 was conducted on the social problems they faced and allowances provided by DSS to the Bede Community. A participant in the focus group discussion said, "We have seen that there is no separate housing system for the Bede community to live in our society. Most of the Bede live in rented houses. Even they cannot rent a good house, because they are not given a good house on rent. Besides, they have to listen to too many harsh words and accept various insults. As they have no good employment, they have to do their communal work such as dancing, singing and playing to maintain their lives".

Negative attitude towards the Bede community is the main problem regarding them. Even today in society they are not accepted as normal. The people of the Bede community were first of all persecuted by their own families. In society they face social, economic and political problems. They could not fulfill their basic needs and rights. They also face problems regarding these issues. In case of social problems, one has to face the negative attitudes of the people of the society, nobody wants to be a friend of them, nobody wants to cooperate rather instigates them to do various anti-social activities.

A participant in the focus group discussion said, "The main problem with the Bede community is the negative attitudes towards them. They are subject to victimization even in their family. They are not treated with respect. Besides from the society they are instigated to do various anti-social activities. So, they are subjugated to indebtedness, poverty, dependency, unemployment and even begging. They face problems getting treatment also. In the Bede community there were so many problems regarding housing and education. Their opinion is not given importance in any respect of the society".

To eliminate all these problems, we must first change the negative attitudes towards the Bede community. They should be given the opportunity to live like humans. The acceptance of the Bede community in the society has to be increased. Their participation should be ensured in various social activities, cultural and religious festivals or events. A friendly relationship should be developed with them. Society should come forward to support them in case of danger.

Although the Bede community is a small part of the total population of Bangladesh, this community has been neglected. These people are victims of discriminatory behavior of the society. So overall development of the country is hampered. Now it is time to bring them into the mainstream of the society by involving them in the overall development of the country.

In the focus group discussion Savar Upazila Social Services Officer said, "According to the information of the DSS, the number of Bede in Savar Upazila is currently 11 thousand. The Social Security program was started in 7 districts of the country as a pilot program from the financial year 2012-13. In the financial year 2013-14, the program has been implemented in a total of 21 districts by expanding the program to 14 new districts. A total of BDT 5,56,00,000.00 (Five Crore Fifty-Six Lacs) has

been allocated for the development of Bede community in the financial year 2020-21. Presently the beneficiary information is online based. We have a software, where we record the information of all the beneficiaries of the Bede community. Now we are delivering allowance money to the beneficiaries through “Nagad” apps. So, they are getting the allowance money in an easier way which reduces their time, cost and visit”.

The Participants from Bede community have raised questions about the amount of allowance provided by the Department of Social Services. Most of the Bede people are dissatisfied with the amount of allowance given by the Department of Social Services. They are paid only BDT 500.00 as a monthly allowance. The cost of living is increasing day by day. So, with this little amount of money how they fulfill their basic needs. The Bede people are struggling to meet up their expenses regarding their food, clothing, house rent, medical expenses, their security or entertainment expenses. So, they have to continue their communal work. At present, the Bede people are receiving allowance through online based software. On the other hand, the biggest problem in case of allowance is the age complications. The age limit for receiving allowance for Bede people has been fixed at 50 years by the Department of Social Services. Due to which many needy members of the Bede community are now unable to receive the allowance.

A representative of the Bede community said, “I have been receiving the allowance from the Department of Social Services for the past two years. Although the amount of allowance is very small, I can buy my medicine sometimes with this allowance money. It is possible to buy only medicine but not possible to buy clothes, pay rent of the house or not possible to buy food. My request to the government is to reduce the age of getting the allowance and increase the amount of allowance”.

A representative of civil society in the focus group discussion said, “Currently, allowances for the Bede people should be increased. Currently, the amount of allowance is BDT 500.00, it is much better if it is BDT 2500.00. With BDT 2500.00 They can lead relatively good lives. They will be able to fulfill their basic needs. And every Bede has to pay the allowance. If anyone has Bede identity, he/she should be under the Social Security Program. Age cannot be a barrier to get the allowance as well”.

FGD-2

FGD-2 was conducted on the education stipend provided by DSS to Bede Students. One of the participants in the focus group discussion said, “The Department of Social Services of the Government of Bangladesh is providing education stipend at 4 levels (Primary level BDT 700.00, Secondary level BDT 800.00, Higher Secondary level BDT 1,000.00 and Higher education level BDT 1,200.00) per month to those who are going to school in the community. However, the number of Bede receiving education stipend is very low. One of the main reasons for this is that the children of the community do not go to

school or are not interested in education. We can also say that we could not create a proper learning environment for them”

From the data obtained from Savar Upazila, it is evident that the number of schools going Bede students who are receiving education stipend provided by the Department of Social Services is negligible. Only a handful of Bede students are receiving this stipend. With this amount of money, they are rarely able to meet their educational needs. However, many Bede students are dissatisfied with the amount of money they receive for this education stipend. While the basic needs of their daily life remain almost unfulfilled, they are using the education stipend to meet their basic needs. In that case, they are struggling to fulfill all the needs of their life, yet their educational life is particularly disrupted.

A Bede student who gets the Student Stipend said, “I have been receiving the education stipend for two years. I get a monthly BDT 1,200.00 as the education stipend. I cannot use the money to purchase my books, notebooks, pens or educational materials. Because sometimes with this money I have to buy clothes and food. Sometimes I have to buy medicines. So, my money is spent on other things. How can I study if I can't eat? If this education stipend was more, maybe I would have been able to study normally”. It is not possible to meet the entire expenses of a Bede student with this insignificant amount of money provided by the government. The amount of education stipend should be increased in case of a Bede student.

The media person in the focus group discussion said, “In our society, due to the lack of education the Bede community is very backward. To bring them into the mainstream we need to take many steps in their education sector. In that case the amount of education stipend given by the government to them should be increased. It is more important to create a suitable learning environment for them. Bede people are constantly looked down upon in our society. They are not considered as human beings. They are not economically independent. Due to which they are not able to progress towards education. So, education stipend should increase to a reasonable limit that a Bede student can continue his studies.”

FGD-3

The Bede community is the most neglected and deprived community in our society. To improve their quality of life, the Government introduces social security programs through the DSS. Under Social Security programs there is a training and post-training grant program for the Bede Community. This FGD conducted on the training and post-training grant provided by DSS.

To bring the Bede Community into the mainstream of society DSS provides training and post training financial assistance of BDT 10,000.00 (Ten thousand). Eligible youth of Bede Community are given skill development training with a view to involving them into income generating activities.

Social Services officer of Savar Upazila said “skill development training is provided to Bede Youth. Approximately 1,920 people have been trained in the financial year 2020-21. In FY 2021-22 also, training was provided to potentially 1920 people. Training on beautification, trailering, driving, computer and cattle husbandry is being imparted under this training program. Where the duration of the training program was 50 working days. The training provided by the Social Services Department of Bangladesh Government is very effective. By being trained, the Bede community was able to improve their skills in certain trades”.

A Bede Participant in the focus group discussion who got training said, “Under the ongoing program of the Bangladesh government, 50 days of vocational training is being provided to increase the skills of the Bede youth to involve them in income-generating activities. They are also given financial assistance of BDT 10,000.00 after the training. They got training on beautification, trailering, driving, computer and cattle husbandry but unfortunately, they could not engage themselves in any income generating activities. Because the amount of assistance is so small to do anything. And many organizations don't take them as their employee because of social taboo. The Government of Bangladesh should take steps to engage the Bede people in income generating activities”.

Representative of the Local Government in the focus group discussion said “The Government wants a comprehensive development for the Bede Community. So it introduces Social Security Programs. But these programs may not bring desired development for them. By considering all the issues raised here, the government will take necessary steps to bring sustainable development for them as they are able to come to the mainstream of the society”.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

According to the constitution of Bangladesh, equal opportunities and rights are guaranteed to every human being, but the reality is quite different. In every sphere of life Bede people are largely neglected. Although the law recognized them, the people of this society did not accept it. As a result, they are largely deprived of every basic right including education and employment. Constantly they have to work hard to overcome all the obstacles of society. We are yet to succeed in establishing our country from least developed countries (LDCs) to middle income countries. Thus, in our society the Bede is considered burdensome. Institutions do not trust them and are not interested in hiring them. If they are hired, they drop out due to lack of accessibility, hostile behavior from colleagues, and discriminatory behavior in the organization. They are unwanted in society. Most of them are unable to engage in respectable professions. So, they are indulging in various immoral activities. Bede people will be able to lead a respectable life by becoming self-reliant if opportunities and working environments arise in the workplace.

Bede people are subjected to discrimination in the society and are deprived of all basic rights including education, housing and treatment. In spite of obstacles those who engage themselves in education are subjected to unbearable sarcasm and are forced too quiet midway. So, they are unable to meet the minimum qualifications for the job. Many others did not get jobs just because they were Bede persons despite obtaining the necessary qualifications. Leaving all these negative behaviors behind, a very small number of Bede persons have established themselves through tireless efforts. Some are working and others are running their own business. Besides, they are working to improve the quality of life of other Bede people. Ananya Vanik is a successful entrepreneur. She has 03 parlors and she gives training to the Bede youth who are interested. She is currently working to improve the quality of life of 120 Bede people.

Besides, various positive initiatives have been taken to improve the quality of life of the Bede community. The government has provided allowances, education stipend and training as well as post-training grants to improve their living standards. The amount of money given by the allowance programs is very small. The allowance is not enough to meet their living expenses. Therefore, in this case the amount of allowance should be increased. If the amount of allowance is fixed at 2000-3000 taka per month instead of BDT 500.00 per month, it will play a much greater role in the daily life of the Bede people. The age limit is a barrier in getting allowance. Person should be aged 50 years to get the allowance. So many poor Bede people are deprived of this allowance provided by the government. Therefore, age complexities of the Bede community should be removed in getting the allowance. BDT 10,000.00 financial assistance is given to the individuals after giving training. But the post training financial assistance program has not become fruitful due to insufficient amounts of money and lack of proper monitoring. The amount of education stipend provided by the Department of Social Services is very low. It is not possible to meet the entire expenses of a Bede student with the education stipend provided by the government. The amount of education stipend should be increased in case of Bede students.

These people should have got the job or employment opportunities from the private sector as well. However, many times the Bede persons are appointed on a project or contractual basis to fulfill the conditions of the donor agency. After the project or contract ends, these people face the same problem which they previously faced. From the websites of various organizations, we can see that they all carry out the recruitment process without discrimination. Many people talk about the equality or non-discrimination recruitment process in society, but it is almost non-existent in the workplace. If every organization in Bangladesh comes forward to recruit talented people and take effective initiatives, then it is possible to achieve remarkable success.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study was carried out by following all the norms and principles. The study tries to present how much the Social Security Programs provided by DSS are effective for the Bede Community to improve their living standard. Analyzing the results of the study, it seems that in most cases the predetermined objectives of the study have been met. However, since no study is found without limitations. Our study also has some limitations. They are presented as below:

- The study could not be carried out across the country.
- This study was conducted on certain Bede people of Savar upazila. It was not possible to include the entire Bede population of Bangladesh here;
- Due to time constraints, it was not possible to collect detailed information of the respondents. In some cases, there are contraindications. Sometimes they were not interested in giving information;
- This study was conducted on a group of people. Therefore, it was difficult to extract accurate information or data from the Bede to ensure their full presence at all stages of data collection; and
- Data collection tools were in Bangla. Most of the sources of the Primary and Secondary data was in Bangla. The respondents also provide their information in Bangla as well. During Data processing the information is translated in English. So, there may be some errors.

CONCLUSION

Social security programs run by the DSS can't bring the desired success. Allowances, education stipends, training and post-training grants program for the Bede Community is unable to meet the demand and needs of Bede people as these programs are not up-to-date regarding present time. As a result, the Bede people are not able to bring the desired benefits and well-being of their lives. Essential and effective measures should be taken to improve the quality of life of the Bede community which may bring change in their lives. The measures are as follow:

The number of Bede people in the country is not at all small. Therefore, the desired development of the country is not possible leaving them behind. There is no alternative to transform them into an organized and unified form. If we want to make them as human resources their ability should be developed by enhancing their skills which create employment opportunities. Government should take initiatives to ensure their participation in economic activities;

The Government should take measures for their integrated and equitable development of the Bede community which is also the demand of time. They have potential. They can reach their full potential if they can lead safe and productive lives. They have to help each other for their own development. They have to work together to get financial assistance from the government or NGO or any donor agency. They have to involve themselves in income generating activities such as tailoring, driving, handicrafts and beautification. Then they will be economically

empowered which will contribute to eradicating their poverty and in this way food security and social equality will be established.

Due to social discrimination, the Bede community appears to be deprived of normal citizenship rights, inheritance of property, normal participation in social, cultural and economic activities. The government is implementing various programs for them through the Department of Social Services, yet the Bede community should unite and make a collective demand to the Bangladesh government to conduct more intensive social security for their development.

Economic empowerment of the Bede community is very essential to keep pace with the developed world. Their economic emancipation will establish social equality and social justice. In this regard social security programs will play a significant role in achieving their economic freedom. In this case, the amount of allowance should be increased, age complications should be removed in getting allowance, long-term and modern trade training should be arranged. Continuity of training must be maintained. Besides, post-training assistance should be increased so that they can invest it in a productive or income generating trade.

Illiteracy is the main obstacle to the development of the Bede community. Incompetency is also responsible. They cannot continue their studies or are not interested. The condition of Bede women is more miserable. They cannot go to school even if they want to. They get married at a very young age or they join their community profession. To educate them, the education stipend for Bede students should increase to a standard level and provide them with educational materials or educational aids so that they become interested in education.

To ensure housing of destitute and landless Bede, the government can take up separate shelter home schemes or reserve houses for them in ongoing shelter home schemes. Every member of the Bede community may be provided education and employment opportunities. They may be provided special cards to get free medical services in all government hospitals. Also, they can be given special cards to make their fares free in all public transport; and

Government should arrange micro credit or financial assistance for the Bede people who want to run small businesses or involve themselves in income generating activities. This initiative will create self-employment. In that case they can relate themselves to the loan programs called RSS (Rural Social Services) and RMC (Rural Mother Center) run by DSS. It would be best if a separate loan program is introduced for them.

Bede people have many limitations. There should be no negative attitudes towards them rather they should be accepted cordially. If it is possible their life may be easier. It is very unfortunate that many authorities are not interested in hiring Bede individuals despite their qualifications. Employers need to change their attitudes. They should only focus on their skills and qualifications.

If it is done, they will be able to free them from the curse of unemployment and it will bring desired development of the country. Although this study was conducted among a very limited number of Bede individuals, their life and struggles are similar. Bede people want their rights as citizens of this country. Cooperation, solidarity, accessibility and non-discrimination all these basic rights including education, employment will be ensured for them. The range of social security programs run by the Department of Social Services should be increased to improve their quality of life. Then the quality of life of the Bede community will be improved and we will be able to bring them into the mainstream of our society.

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