



Impact Evaluation of Support Services Programme for Vulnerable Groups (SSPVGs)



Carried out by:
Evaluation Sector
Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED)
Ministry of Planning, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Conducted by:



BISR
Bangladesh Institute of Social Research

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Despite many noteworthy achievements in economic development, poverty is a reality in Bangladesh where 47 million people live in below poverty level. Many of them are living in households which are female headed, in hard to reach areas, and consisting of socially excluded and other vulnerable groups. In order to overcome that problem the Department of Social Services undertook a project entitled "Project Support Services Programme for Vulnerable Group (SSPVG)" under which 17,500 tea garden workers; 50,000 Quami Madrasha, Lillah Boarding and Orphanage students; 10,000 Ramkrishno Mission, Buddha Bihar, Moth and Toll students; 1000 cancer patients; and 43 infrastructure development of Ramkrishno Mission, Buddha Bihar, Moth and Toll were supported.

Objectives of the project

The objectives of the 'Support Services Program for Vulnerable Group (SSPVG)' were as follows:

- to improve the socio-economic development of the tea garden laborers in greater Sylhet Division.
- to bring the student of Quami Madrasa, Lillah Boarding/ Orphanage to the mainstream of the society.
- to provide financial assistance to the student of Ramkrishno Mission, Buddha Bihar, Moth and toll.
- to repair and maintain Ramkrishno Mission, Buddha Bihar, Moth and Toll and development of existing buildings; and
- to extend help to poor cancer patient to relief their burden.

Delivery from the project

The followings were the delivery made from the project:

Tea garden worker: Each tea garden worker was given Ration and Shari-Lungi worth of Tk. 4,000 where 17,500 tea workers from Sylhet division were supported. The budget for the same was Tk. 700 lakh (35% of total cost);

Quami Madrasha, Lillah Boarding and Orphanage students: Each Quami Madrasa, Lillah Boarding and Orphanage student was given Tk. 1000 at a time from all divisions where total 50,000 students were supported. The budget was Tk. 500 lakh (25% of total budget).

Ramkrishno Mission, Buddha Bihar, Moth and Toll students: Each student of those institutes was given Tk.1,000 covering all the divisions where 10,000 students received that. The budget was Tk. 100 lakh (5% of the total budget)

Cancer patient: Each cancer patient was given Tk.50,000, coming from different districts where only 1000 cancer patients were given support. The budget for the same was Tk. 500 lakh (25% of total budget).

Infrastructure development of Ramkrishno Mission, Buddha Bihar, Moth and Toll: Some 43 Infrastructures were given Tk. 19,500,000 with different size of amount covering all divisions of Bangladesh.

Method of Delivery

The project was implemented by the Department of Social Services. A national coordination and implementation committee was formed headed by the honorable Minister in-Charge of the Ministry of Social Welfare where other dignitaries were the member. The committee was responsible for giving total guidance, approve the list of the beneficiaries, monitor the progress of

implementation and considering the real situation intra-componental adjustment of fund to be made.

Tea garden worker: In the case of selection of tea garden worker, a decentralized method was followed where a local level committee at Upazila level was responsible for finalization of list of beneficiaries. A census of total number of households by garden of each Upazila was made first. After estimating the total number of tea garden households, the number of beneficiary was proportionately selected from each garden. The local level committee consisting leader of Panchayet of tea garden workers, representative of tea garden management, local UP office representative selected the beneficiary which was approved by the local Upazila committee which was finally approved by the national committee. After getting approval from national committee by 3 installments they were given ration worth of Tk. 3600 and Sari-Lungi worth of Tk.400 which means each household totally got benefits of Tk. 4000. In some cases instead of 3 installments it was given in two installments. The ration include rice (20 kg.), pulses (2 kg.), oil (2 liter), potato (10 kg.), salt (2 kg.) sugar (2 kg.) and soap (3 pcs.).

Quami Madrasa, Lillah Boarding and Orphanage students: In the case of student selection from Quami Madras and others, a similar decentralized method was followed where at first a public notice was served to all UP offices and other organizations. The potential Madrasas and others applied with a long list of students and finally they came up with a short list of students who were the most needy and thereby deserving support from the project. The shortlist was prepared with the help of local honorable persons along with the teachers of the Madrasa and others. The shortlist was approved by the Upazila implementation committee which finally sent to the national committee for approval and got sanction of the same.

Ramkrishno Mission, Buddha Bihar, Moth and Toll students: In the case of student selection from Ramkrishan Mission and others, a similar decentralized method was followed where at first a public notice was served to all Ramkriahna Mission and other similar organizations. The potential Ramkrishna mission applied with a list of students who were the most needy and thereby deserving support from the project. The list was prepared by the authority of Ramkrishna Mission and others. The list was approved by the Upazila implementation committee which finally got approval from the national committee.

Cancer patient: In the case of cancer patient DC, UNO, Civil Surgeon, Social Welfare Officer, Bangladesh Cancer Society and Mohakhali Cancer Hospital authority were informed and accordingly the poor cancer patient applied to the Project Director along with necessary papers like doctors' certificate, certificate from the elected representative about economic status, bills and vouchers of different treatments, national ID, photograph, etc. Considering the gravity of the situation the central committee approved the list and disbursed the fund through cheque to their bank account. Some high level government officials also got this support as they lost all their resources for making payment for the treatment.

Infrastructure development of Ramkrishno Mission, Buddha Bihar, Moth and Toll: In the case of infrastructure DC, UNO, and Social Welfare Officer were informed and the organization which has registration could only apply but since many of those organizations did not have registration the Project Implementation Committee (PIC) waved that condition. The respective organization applied with an estimate mostly with huge amount of budget which was reduced by them considering the availability of fund. The committee was headed by the DG of DSS, member from IMED, PWD and others and it was entrusted with the PWD for implementation. The PWD finally implemented the work across the country.

Objectives of the study

The preeminent objectives of the study include: (a) review the implementation status of major components of the project; (b) assess whether the project achieved its aims and objectives; (c) assess the impacts, benefits, and value of the project in the broader context; (d) stimulate discussion with the community to synthesize knowledge; and (e) identify the strengths and weakness of the project and suggest appropriate recommendations.

Methodology of the study

In order to do the study systematically both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used. Under the qualitative method the project was assessed in terms of implementation status of the project, its impacts, benefits and socio-economic improvements resulted from the project activities. Under the quantitative method some statistical information were collected about the different components of the project i.e. financial assistance, infrastructure development, special treatment assistance, etc. Data were collected both from primary and the secondary sources. In addition to that the consultant shared with the project authority to finalize the whole study design and to prepare detail action plan of the evaluation study. For the present study 377 tea garden workers with 6 FGDs and 6 KIIs; 390 Quami Madrasha, Lillah Boarding and Orphanage students with 6 FGDs and 6 KIIs, 384 Ramkrishno mission, Buddha Bihar, Moth and Toll students with 6 FGDs and 6 KIIs, 277 cancer patients with 6 FGDs and 6 KIIs and 12 infrastructure development with 3 FGDs and 3 KIIs of Ramkrishno Mission, Buddha Bihar, Moth and Toll were selected and studied. Using a scientific basis of sample selection the study was completed after collecting and processing necessary data and information.

Findings of the study

The followings were the key findings:

Tea Garden Workers:

- Out of all aided 17,500 tea garden workers, each got ration of worth of tk.3,600 and Lugi and Sari of Tk. 400.
- All received ration and Shari-Lungi of same amount of money
- Each aided household had average monthly income of Tk. 3216 and average expenditure of Tk. 3463 which indicates to their hardship.
- During project period 18% household had surplus food after having 3 meals a day, where 82% could have 3 meals a day
- Before project none had any surplus after having 3 meals and 14.59% could have 3 meals a day.
- In total the change was observed in the case of 67% in regard to 3 meals a day.
- Some 94% consider the project as most successful
- Almost all aided households are in favour of continuation of this project
- In line with the objectives of the project it enabled to improve the socio-economic development of the tea garden laborers in greater Sylhet Division

Quami Madrasha, Lillah Boarding and Orphanage students

- In total 50,000 students were provided with financial assistance from this project as per target
- All of them received that fund except 3% who received Tk. 600 and rest Tk. 400 was utilized by their Madrasha
- With this money 68% purchased cloths, books and other essential items
- Some 79% mentioned that they would not have gone to buy those items had they not been assisted
- Some 50% students considered the project as the most successful
- Some 89% want this type of project in future as that has accrued many types of benefits to them particularly to meet their some crises
- The objectives of the project to bring the student of Quami Madrasa, Lillah Boarding/ Orphanage to the mainstream of the society has been achieved to a considerable extent in the sense that earlier they were never been aided by the government under its any program which has been changed by the project and they felt that the project has given some value to them. Moreover, 100% aided Madrasha hoist national flag and about 50% sing the national anthem.

Ramkrishno Mission, Buddha Bihar, Moth and Toll students

- All students got that allocated fund i.e. Tk. 1000
- With that fund some 27% of students purchased books, 10% cloth and 31% books and cloth and 32% other essential items
- Some 82% could not purchase those items had there not been any assistance from the project side
- Some 56% students considered it as a most successful project
- About 93% students want this project in future as this has given an opportunity to them to meet some of their crises
- In line with the objective of the project it has provided financial assistance to the student of Ramkrishno Mission, Buddha Bihar, Moth and toll.

Cancer patients

- All received Tk. 50,000 as treatment fund from the project
- Some 97% received fund without any trouble
- 2 patients died before receiving fund
- 7 (3%) got cured after using this fund
- Some 34% out of total aided patients are alive and 48% died and the rest 18% could not be located as they shifted from the recorded address to new unknown addresses or was not found present during the visit of the investigators.
- Some 25% died within less than 90 days after receiving fund, and 34% patient died within 271–365 days
- Some 57% spent entire fund within less than 60 days
- Some 29% patient was alive for 2-3 years after suffering from cancer
- In line with the objectives, the project had successfully extended help to poor cancer patient to relief their burden.

Infrastructure development of Ramkrishno Mission, Buddha Bihar, Moth and Toll

- In total 43 units got assistance from the project
- Among these 40% was the extension work, 33% repair and 20% re-construction and 7% maintenance works were done
- Among the construction materials used 78% good, 18% fair and 4% poor
- Some 46% of workmanship was good and another 46% was fair
- In the case of 27% works, female labour were used and no child labour was used
- Some 91% work was completed as per design
- All works (100%) could be completed in time which was an excellent achievement of the project as there was no time or cost overrun
- Some 46% management committees mentioned that the quality of work was good and same opinion was given by the engineer of the study team
- The project objective was to repair and maintain Ramkrishno Mission, Buddha Bihar, Moth and Toll and development of existing buildings which have been done successfully

Qualitative findings

Tea Garden Labor

- The selection procedure of tea garden labor was proper as there was no objection made by anybody.

- The upazila committee carried out the responsibility following the procedure that was set for them.
- The ration and other materials have been distributed in an elegant way
- No irregularity was reported in relation to ration distribution or other items
- There were many advantages and disadvantages of this project. Some advantages were: (a) helped to have better life, (b) removed malnutrition to some extent during the project period, (c) increased food security, (d) temporary economic benefits, and (e) increased work spirit. Some disadvantages were: (a) availability of food was very limited, (b) distribution of bad quality ration goods mainly potato; and (c) this type of support was not running every year.

Quami Madrasha, Lillah Boarding and Orphanage students

- Selection of institutions and students was also appropriate
- The Upazila committee followed the set system for the project where they selected the students on the basis of their hardship and merit.
- Many advantages of the project were there like the student bought cloth, books and fulfilled others needs.
- No irregularity was reported
- Increased attendance of the students and felt encouraged to get religious education
- There were many advantages and disadvantages of this project which include: temporary fulfillment of some crises and students became attentive to study and the project was not a regular program.

Ramkrishno Mission, Buddha Bihar, Moth and Toll students

- Selection of Ramkrishno Mission, Buddha Bihar, Moth and Toll was proper
- The Upazila committee followed the implementation approach properly that was set for that purpose
- Students received the allocated fund properly
- With the received fund they could remove some crises, bought copies (Khata), books, bags, dresses and tuition fees.
- No report on any irregularity
- It helped to increase the education rate, encouraged the students for schooling and provided some necessary support to fulfill their demand.
- It is not a program rather a project and it has insufficient fund.

Cancer Patient

- The selection of cancer patient was appropriate but local people do not know much about this type of program or project.
- They did not face any problem in the case of getting cheque of Tk.50,000.
- By this fund, they continued treatment for many days and some paid the debt.
- Many weaknesses of this project were reported such as lack of public awareness about this project and did not disburse the fund quickly.

Infrastructures

- Infrastructures were selected properly and all selections were appropriate
- The quality of works were mostly satisfactory but it fulfilled their partial requirement
- In future project should run on a regular program basis rather than a project

SWOT Analysis

Strength

- Needs-based or demand driven which is evident in the income group covered under the project
- Decentralization of implementation of the project activities
- No reported time or cost overrun or no delay in placement of fund
- Gender balanced focused activities which is under the set target of MDGs
- Urban and rural focused activities which is evident in the coverage of the project
- Multi-religious focused activities
- Multi-ethnic focused activities

Weakness

- Alternative input delivery could be tested
- Many more marginalized groups could be covered

Opportunities

- Alternative funding arrangement may be considered or arrangement may be made like in the case of treatment of cancer patients
- Involving the employer in the case of tea garden, for example, the garden management can ensure water supply and sanitation for the workers which are their obligation as per labour law of the country

Threat

- If it runs as a project it would serve intermittently
- Most deserving people may be deprived and area coverage may be inadequate

Conclusions

1. The project was perceived as welfare project with some in-built development elements where through the project many welfare works could be done.
2. It was a multi-dimensional project where it has covered the health issues as well as infrastructural issues and multi-religious and multi-ethnic issues.
3. The project also covered various occupational groups, extreme low income groups, rural as well as urban groups, male and female groups including children.
4. The project followed a kind of new approach in its perspective, new coverage and new groups which were not covered earlier under any other welfare activities. In this sense the project is an innovative one.

Recommendations

1. The project has scope to improve a lot in terms of area coverage and group coverage which will improve the effectiveness and usefulness of the project
2. It is a welfare oriented project with some development elements which can be strengthen further.
3. The implementation strategy of the project or design of the project may be improved further, for example, cancer patients may get more benefits by having an MOU with any service delivery organization to give services to the aided patients at some concessional rate, or be given medicines at concessional rate.

4. Tea garden workers may be supported with some IGA activities rather than giving cash or food grant for consumption purposes. It appears a kind of relief work to give them some kind of temporary relief from food crisis which however would develop a kind of dependency rather than making them self-reliant. Involvement of tea garden management with this kind of activities is more important, e.g. they may be asked to adhere more to labour law, to increase the productivity of the labour by improving their garden management, which, in turn, can improve wage rate and thereby the quality of life of the tea garden labour.
5. The assistance to Quami Madrasha students is very important for mainstreaming purposes as that has excellent potential to make them socially included who are otherwise socially considered as marginalized. It is a social streamlining approach where any section of people who for certain reasons were not brought under mainstream, has to be brought under that to improve and strengthen the social solidarity.
6. The assistance to Ramkrishan Mission is also like that where these groups who are marginalized for various reasons may be brought under the mainstream. As there are many followers of this mission abroad it will improve the image of the country outside Bangladesh.
7. The funding for infrastructure is again may be extended to the health service providing institutions or where some kind of health services are provided in one form or another may be given priority. Any organization which has moral as well as social missions may be given priority.
8. The project should include some other marginalized social groups or socially excluded groups like dom, sweeper, duli, etc.
9. If the cancer patient passes away before receiving fund the same fund may be allocated to the next deserving applicant
10. Among the patients some other diseases impacted people may be considered like kidney patient and liver cirrhosis patient.
11. More innovative method of involving the private sector may be considered where the design of the project is considerably lacking. The new and innovative approach needs to be added.
12. This project may continue next time as a welfare project to render services to the needy people who are not otherwise covered under any social safety net program