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CONSCIOUSNESS LEVEL OF THE BENEFICIARIES AND THE GENERAL PEOPLE ABOUT SOCIAL SAFETY NET PROGRAMMES (SSNPs) IN BANGLADESH: A STUDY ON SELECTED AREA

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Abstract: Social Safety Net Programme is not a new concept in the world but it has a long and vivid history. Social Safety Net Programmes has been defined and classified differently by many thinkers at different times. At present there are almost 126 programmes under SSNPs in Bangladesh. Every year a significant amount is allocated for the Social safety net sector in Bangladesh. The present government has been increasing this allocation every year for three consecutive terms. In the FY 20120-21 the government allocated for SSNPs sector 95 thousands 576 corer taka. To ensure the sustainable development the Government of Bangladesh has started a total of 126 Safety Net Programmes. To identify the consciousness level of the beneficiaries and the general people about Social Safety Net Programmes (SSNPs) in Bangladesh, a field study has been conducted in the selected two union parishads. Total 112 respondents of three categories have been interviewed in this regard. In this study, researcher has identified the consciousness level of the beneficiaries and the general people about SSNPs in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Social Safety net Programmes Beneficiaries General People, Bangladesh

Introduction

The Social Security or Social Safety Net Programme is a group of policies and programmes which aims are to lessen social and economic hazard and vulnerability of the poor, to increase their ability to defend themselves against risks and damages of income including under emergency situations (Ahmed 2019). Basically social safety net programs (SSNPs) is protective tools taken by the government of a state to protect the poor and vulnerable groups of its society (Ahmed & Islam, 2011, p. 15) Bangladesh government already has taken various steps to make the Social Safety Net Programmes (SSNPs) more integrated and effective. Among these is the National Social safety net Strategy of 2015 (NSSS). At present there are four types of Programmes

like: Initiatives for employment generation, Incentives to cope with natural crisis and other problems, Initiatives given to the parents for their children's education and Programmes given to the families to development their health status (khuda). Bangladesh government continuously has been increasing the budget for Social Safety Net Programme in every year. In the 2020-21 fiscal years, the number of beneficiaries has been increased from 81 lakhs to 98 lakhs by the Bangladesh government (DailySamakal, 2020). However, in some cases there are some complications and obstacles have remained.

Objectives of the Study

This study is to explore the conciseness level of beneficiaries and the general people about SSNPs at the rural level in Bangladesh. The specific objectives of this study are:

- (1) To find out the concept of the beneficiaries about Social Safety net Programmes.
- (2) To examine the consciousness level of the general people about Social Safety net Programmes.
- (3) To explore the opinion of the local authorities about SSNPs.

Methodology

This is a study on the Social Safety Nets Programmes (SSNPs) of the Bangladesh Government and this research is conducted at the rural area at Rajshahi district of Bangladesh. In this study both qualitative and quantitative methods have been applied and it is considered a mixed method study in nature. It is combined on both primary and secondary data sources. The primary data are collected with the help of questionnaire through interview method from sampled respondents who are selected through random sampling procedure. For collecting relevant primary data for this research, three categories of respondents were interviewed. They are; the Chairmen, the Members of the Union Parishads, the general people and the beneficiaries of SSNPs at the root level of the mentioned areas.

Justification of the Study Area

It is very time-consuming and expensive to collect data from all of the beneficiaries of SSNPs in Bangladesh. The Researchers select only two Union Parishads of Paba Upazila at Rajshahi district. In the study areas, there are various professionals including employees, businessmen, teachers, farmers, day laborer, and households. There are several social safety net programmes run by the Bangladesh government in study areas. I think that it can give an idea of the consciousness level of the beneficiaries and the general people in the other parts of the country. Moreover, the researchers permanently live in Rajshahi. So, areas have been selected due to the time and budget limitation.

Social Safety Net Programme

Social Safety Net Programmes have a long history, especially the poverty relief program. The basic idea of the Social Safety Net Programmes started in the nineteenth century. The word was first uttered in a speech of Simon

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Bolivar on the occasion of Venezuela's Independence Day (1819). In the speech, he said, "The most perfect system of government which produces the most happiness is the greatest amount of social safety net and political stability." (Wikipedia, 2020) A details social safety net programmes include all sector of vulnerable population covering the unemployed, disabled, sick, aged, orphans, women-headed households, street children, etc. (Ahmed, 2019) "Social safety net is the protection that a society provides to individuals and households to ensure access to health care and to guarantee income security, particularly in cases of old age, unemployment, sickness, invalidity, work injury, maternity or loss of a breadwinner" (ILO, Social Security n. d). "Social security is a system under which a government pays money regularly to certain groups of people, for example the sick, the unemployed, or those with no other income." (Collinsdictionary n. d.)

Finally it can be said that, Social Security or Social Safety Net Programmes is a programme taken by the government of a state for the economic security and social welfare of its citizens.

Literature Review

Review of literature is indispensable for the research (Abedin). There are several studies have been conducted in the matter of Social Safety Net Programmes in Bangladesh but none of them is directly related or concerned to this research. From them some ideas, guideline, was taken for a conclusive completion of this research.

Rahman, et al. (2014) brilliantly discussed the different aspects of Social Safety Net in Bangladesh, current state of social safety net in Bangladesh as well as the experience of other countries in the world, especially of China and Mexico in their book. They also discussed the current poverty situation in Bangladesh, the role of social safety net in poverty reduction, the amount of government allocation stake in social safety net. But the consciousness level of the beneficiaries at the rural level was not stated clearly.

Mohiuddin (2017) has tried to identify the effectiveness of SSNPs in the poverty alleviation in Bangladesh, inclusion and exclusion errors at the programme-level based on experiences in four villages of Bangladesh. But the consciousness level of the beneficiaries at the rural level was not discussed clearly.

Haidar and Mahamud (2017) discussed about beneficiary selection procedure of SSNPs Programme. They illustrated the Consequence of not getting access to SSNPs Programme. But the consciousness level of the beneficiaries at the rural level was not stated clearly.

Mahmuda (2015) clearly discussed the Social safety Net Programme in Bangladesh, the poverty situation of Bangladesh, the impacts of SSNPs on the women's development as well as food security and socio-economic facts. But especially there is no discussion on the conciseness level of the beneficiaries about SSNPs.

Bhattacharjee, et al. (2012) clearly discussed the socio-economic condition of the elderly people in the rural areas. The authors in this book focused only the old age allowance among 126 Safety Net Programmes of SSNPs. But the consciousness level of the beneficiaries at the rural level was not stated clearly. Guha (2012) discussed the various aspects of "Cash Transfer" system as means of providing benefits to the beneficiaries under the SSNPs. There is no discussion on the consciousness level of the beneficiaries and the general people about SSNPs.

Data Analysis and Findings

Consciousness level of the beneficiaries about SSNPs

The beneficiaries need to have a clear concept about social safety net programmes (SSNPs) but in reality it opposite. The general people or the beneficiaries have very vague ideas about the programmes; even many of them don't know what the social safety net programmes are. On the other hand the beneficiaries who know, they have not clear concept on it.

Table 1: Idea about SSNPs

Idea about SSNPs	Frequency	Percent
Have a little idea	58	82.9
Have not any idea	12	17.1
Total	70	100.0

Source: Field survey 2020

Table 2: Level of Consciousness

Level of Consciousness	Frequency	Percent
Know a little	47	81.0
Know well	11	19.0
Total	58	100.0

Source: Field survey 2020

The table 7.1 shows that 82.9% of the respondents know something about SSNPs. On the other hand, 17.1% of the respondents of the beneficiaries have not any idea about SSNPs of the government. Then the table 7.2 indicates that 67.1% of the respondents know a little bit about SSNPs and only 15.7% of the respondents know well about SSNPs of Bangladesh government. This study finds that a large number of respondents have not enough knowledge about SSNPs. Even who know, their concept on SSNPs is not clear.

Consciousness level of the general people about SSNPs

The general people need to have a clear idea of the programs. Since the rate of education in Bangladesh is not yet 100%, the public are less aware of these issues. On the other hand the poverty rate is high among the illiterate villagers.

Table 3: Consciousness level of the General people about SSNPs

Consciousness level of the General people about SSNPs	Frequency	Percent
Aware	4	33.33
Less aware	6	50
Not aware	2	16.7

Total	12	100.00
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Source: Field survey 2020

In order to access the views of the local elected representatives about the awareness of the general people on SSNPs some questions have been placed before them. The above table 7.3 illustrates that 33.33% of the respondents think that general people are aware about SSNPs, 50% of the total respondents opined that the general people are less aware about SSNPs and 16.7% of the respondents think that the general people are not aware about SSNPs. This study finds that general people have not clear concept on SSNPs. Even those who have an idea on SSNPs is very vague concept.

Online Database/Digitalization

It is more important to keep the total number of the poor people, total government allocation, sector-based allocation, etc. in the online database of an UP so that anyone can find all the information of the UP while sitting at home. So that it is less likely to be misunderstood and the opposition cannot carry out propaganda.

Table 4: Online Database/Digitalization

Do you have online database?	Frequency	Percent
Have Online Database	6	50.0
Not have Online Database	6	50.0
Total	12	100.0

Source: Field survey 2020

Above table shows, 50% respondents said that they have online database and 50% told that they have not online database. Even though the government already has allocated funds and has appointed the employees to create online databases, but in the 50% of UP online databases are not available.

Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

Findings and Conclusion

The Bangladesh Government is increasing the allocation for the Social safety net sector every year regularly but the beneficiaries or the general people at the rural level even the local elected representatives at the rural level have very vague ideas about social Safety net programmes so that the people of the rural level are depriving of getting the actual benefits. It is very important that the general people have a clear concept on Social Safety net programmes (SSNPs) but reality is opposite. The table 7.1 shows that 82.9% of the respondents know something about SSNPs. On the other hand, 17.1% of the respondents of the beneficiaries have not any idea about SSNPs of the government. The above table 7.3 illustrates that 33.33% of the respondents (local elected representatives) think that general people are aware about SSNPs, 50% of the total respondents opined that the general people are less aware about SSNPs and 16.7% of the respondents think that the general people are not aware about SSNPs. Above table 7.4 shows, 50% respondents said that they have online database and 50% told that they have not online database. If every union parishad had online database with

all information, the people would be more aware of Social Safety Net Programmes (SSNPs) of Bangladesh government.

Recommendations

- 1) Every union parishad should take the steps so that the beneficiaries and the general people can easily know about all the social safety net programmes of the government.
- 2) The authority should take necessary steps to increase the consciousness level of the beneficiaries.
- 3) The authority also should take necessary steps to aware the general people about SSNPs.
- 4) Online database with the names, numbers and quantities of beneficiaries as well as the number of the benefits of each union at the local level should be made.
- 5) Professionalism in social safety nets distribution and monitoring needs to be ensured.

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