

# Beggars Rehabilitation Initiatives: An Assessment of Narail District

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## Abstract

The study attempts to assess the effectiveness of the beggars' rehabilitation initiatives which has been implemented by District Administration, Narail. Every citizen has constitutional right to work, duty and to have value and honour for his/her working (GoB 1972). But the beggars forgot that rights and engaged begging door to door. Consequently they lost their productive power, social dignity and confidence as well. Not only that begging tarnishes the image of the society as well as state. Begging itself is an unproductive job which diminishes potential productive power of the individuals. The beggars are being considered as social burden, hindrance to social norms, decencies and beauties. The study found rehabilitation initiatives enhances the productive power as well as the social dignity of the rehabilitated persons in the district. Most of them are engaged in various professions and they are earning about two US dollar per day which is being added in gross domestic product of Bangladesh. They have changed their social identity from beggars to entrepreneurs and they are no more social burden. A mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches has been applied to fulfill the objective of this study. The study identified some challenges and some recommendations to overcome those challenges are illustrated in this paper.

**Keywords:** Income Generating Activities (IGA), Vulnerable Group Development (VGD), Employment Generation Program for the Poorest (EGPP), Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Statement of the Problem

The Constitution guides to remove social and economic inequality and to attain a uniform level of economic development throughout the Republic (GOB, 1972). "No-one must be left behind. People who are hardest to reach should be given priority" (Jan Eliasson, 2016). Begging may lead livelihoods but not make sociable, society don't regard the beggars as human being EBK (2016). The begging makes their life-force disable (Younus 2008). Begging became a direct threat to the prominent social values (Sharmin 2015). Generally begging originates from poverty which is decreasing rapidly. MDG Bangladesh Progress Report-2015 shows that poverty has been dropped on an average 1.74 percentage points during the period of 2000-2010 while MDG target was 1.20 percentage points. The poverty and extreme poverty have been reduced to 24.3% and 12.9% respectively (budget speech, 2018). A total of taka 64,656 crore has been allocated in current fiscal year (2018-2019) for implementing 136 social safety net programs (SSNP) to address hardcore poor. Despite the initiatives by the government to alleviate poverty, a section of poor people seek help for their food, shelter, cloths. They beg door to door, in the streets, mosque, traffic signal, railway station, ferry-ghat, market places, educational institutions and other places. Some of them claim that they are left out from government's social safety net programs; some of them claim that the amount is

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not sufficient to lead their family. However, begging contradicts middle income country by 2021 and SGG goal 1 and goal 2 i.e end poverty and zero hunger by 2030. With the support of government and people of Narail, District Administration has rehabilitated all the beggars (798) of the district through alternative employment. The effectiveness of the rehabilitation initiatives depend on increasing productivity, enhancing social dignity, personality, self sufficiency, self satisfaction, happiness etc, of the rehabilitated persons. This paper tries to examine whether any change take place in case of productivity and social dignity of the rehabilitated persons.

## **1.2 Objective of the Study**

- a) to assess the change that happened in terms of regaining productive power and
- b) Social dignity with their alternative employment other than beggary.

## **1.3 Scope**

The study was conducted with persons who were identified beggars and given various kinds of materials for income generating activities, included government social safety net protections such as allowances, member of Ekti Bari Ekti Khamar Samiti in the Narail district. Their income generating activities, livelihoods, social identification i.e. how they are being treated, are analyzed in this study.

## **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The study is aligned with middle income country by 2021, developed country by 2041. Bangladesh already achieved the eligibility criteria of developing country and committed to achieve sustainable development goals by 2030. Beggar-free Bangladesh is the demand of the time.

## **1.5 Limitations**

Research activities on beggars rehabilitation is seen very rare. There is no set indicator to measure social dignity and productivity, its comparison between past and present situation. Moreover, the respondents are not aware and educated, so it is not easy to infer actual facts and findings.

## **2. Literature Review**

This chapter illustrates conceptual framework, government and non government initiatives for beggar's rehabilitations. Kishoreganj Upazila Administration, Nilphamari and Narail District Administration have been declared beggar-free upazila and Zila respectively (Cabinet DO letter 2017). Directorate of Social Service, Grameen Bank, PKSf and some NGOs have done some work on beggar rehabilitation. The reports, returns, publications are being reviewed.

### **2.1 Conceptual Framework of the Study**

Begging means asking people for money, food, shelter, gifts and other things when one is unable to manage those things. This happens in case of a real beggar who begs door to door to meet his or her hunger and other basic needs. Other than real beggars, there are seasonal, professional and circumstantial beggars in the street of Bangladesh. Accidents, river erosion, disaster and natural calamities may compel someone to beggary.. Whatever the reasons, they are begging. Government and non government organizations are working for mainstreaming them through various programs. Such as, the Ministry of Social Welfare through Directorate of Social Service (DSS) attempted to rehabilitate the beggars at their ancestral homes in village or town. They started piloting to make Dhaka City as beggar-free. Tk. 6.32 crore, tk. 7.00 crore and tk. 10.00 crore were allocated in the fiscal year 2010-2011, 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 respectively. Getting insignificant results budget allocation has been reduced significantly. After fiscal year 2012-2013,

taka 50 lacs are allocated each year to the Beggars Rehabilitation Project of Directorate of Social Service.. The website data of DSS shows that 10,000 beggars already surveyed, 2,000 have been targeted for their rehabilitation at their ancestral homes in villages or towns by the Directorate of Social Service with the help of NGOs. Kishoreganj Upazila Administration declared as Beggar-Free Upazila on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2014. They formed capital of taka 14800 for each rehabilitee in one house one farm samitee and Palli Sonchoy Bank. Homes have been built from ashrayan-2 project for homeless. All of them included in social safety net programs. Divisional Commissioner, Khulna started beggar rehabilitation activities in the whole Division including Khulna City Corporation. Divisional Commissioner raised the issue to honorable Prime Minister (HPM) on the occasion of Development Fair 2017. Honourable Prime Minister appreciated and congratulated for rehabilitating the beggars. Officials and staffs donated from their salary to expedite the rehabilitation activities. .Prime Minister’s Office has undertaken has an action plan to make beggar-free Bangladesh by 2020. Principal Coordinator, SDGs Mr. Abul Kalam Azad is playing leading role in this regard. One House One Farm Project has a target to rehabilitate one lacs beggars across the country by 2020.

### **2.3: Initiatives taken by NGO and Other Institutions**

Grameen Bank took a special program called “Struggling Members Program” in 2002 exclusively for the beggars (Zamadar, 2015). The study states, 111,296 beggars joined in the program, 19678 left begging and 10,185 joined in GB mainstream borrowers. Beggar rehabilitation programme is a unique initiative of ENRICH. So far, 625 beggars from all 150 ENRICH Unions have been rehabilitated and they are now living with dignity. Global Giving Foundation states rehabilitated 100 women have acquired ability and confidence to earn. DAM Foundation for Economic Development (DFED, 2012) has undertaken beggar’s rehabilitation project and they treated begging as a national problem.

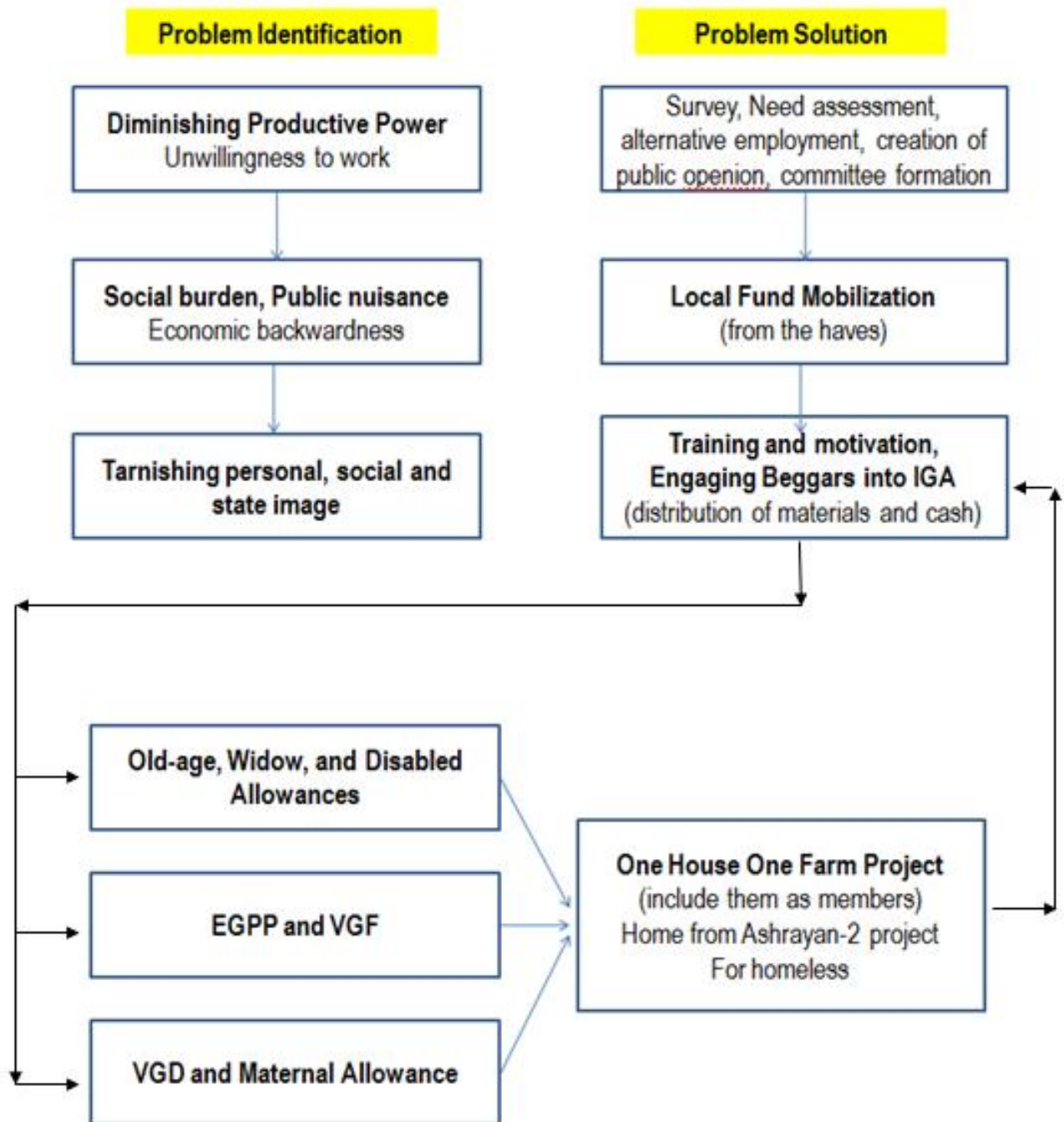
#### **Research Gap**

A few studies have been done on women, child and blind begging and their rehabilitation; Impact assessment in a particular district/ area is not found. Particularly no study is found on social dignity and productive power of the rehabilitated people from giving up beggary.

### **2.4. Narail District Administration:**

Seeing beggars in the streets and their vulnerable conditions Narail District Administration undertook an action plan in the year 2016. They identified 798 beggars in the district through a number of surveys with the help of village police, UP Secretaries, field assistants, NGO activists and member of civil society. They arranged alternative employment after assessing their needs and desire. People’s supports were created and involved them for beggars’ rehabilitations. They mobilized fund locally and from Social Welfare Council and Directorate of Social Service. They distributed materials as per their capacity to work and desire for IGA. They were included under social safety net programs. Made them member of one house one farm project; formed capital of taka 12,000 to 14000 for each member; arranged home for homeless from Ashrayan-2 project; tagged office/ institution with each rehabilitated family for monitoring and guiding their activities. The activities are shown at a glance in the chart below:

## Beggars Rehabilitation Model



### **3. Methodology**

To achieve the objectives of the study, primary data was collected through survey, interview and FGD. Since the research is a mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Detailed are described below:

#### **3.1 Primary Data**

In-depth interview with ten rehabilitated persons were taken to collect data about their socio-economic conditions especially about their present economic activities, productivity and social dignity. Two Focused Group Discussion were conducted for qualitative data where Union Parishad Chairman, Union Parishad Secretary, UCO, OHOF project, UP members, member from civil society, UDC entrepreneur and rehabilitated persons were present. Semi structured questionnaire were used to conduct interview and Focused Group Discussions. Coding, memoing were used to analyze to qualitative data. Survey was conducted with closed and open ended questionnaire for quantitative approach. The sample size was 102 where as total population was 798. Among them 53 are male and 47 are female rehabilitees. The data was collected from 33 unions and 2 municipalities which covered almost whole district. All of them are rehabilitated by district administration, Narail along with three upazila administration as well as union parishad. There were 17 questions to collect data through survey. The questions are about professions, IGA, daily average income, productivity, eating at other's home without invitation, social dignity, satisfaction level at present condition etc. Survey was conducted with the help of Field Assistants of Ekti Bari Ekti khamar project and Palli Sanchoy Bank. Table, chart have been used to analyze the data.

#### **3.2 Secondary Data**

Secondary data had collected from “Mainstreaming for Development: Beggar-Free Narail Zila”, published by Narail District Administration (2017), Solvency for Disadvantaged published by Ekti Bari Ekti Khamar Project, How to Quit Begging published by Grameen bank. Bangladesh Economic Review 2017, Budget Speech 2017-2018 and other reports have also been used to prepare this paper.

### **4. Data analysis/ Discussion**

Both qualitative and quantitative data are analyzed together to examine the study objectives. Changes in productivity or exploitation of potential productive power and enhancement social dignities are major independent variables which enhance success of beggar rehabilitation initiatives. Again these two factors depend on some other independent variables. The detailed are discussed in the following sub-heads:

#### **4.1. Productivity/ change in productive power**

One of the objectives of the study is to assess potential productive power which is inherent to all human being. Due to beggary they did not use that latent productive power. After rehabilitation, are they productive? are they using the productive power? According to the publication of Narail District Administration- “Mainstreaming of Development: Beggar-Free Narail District” all the identified 798

beggars were given various types of materials. From March 2016 to February 2017 about 34 lacs taka was spent for buying materials and distributed among them. Detailed are shown in the following table:

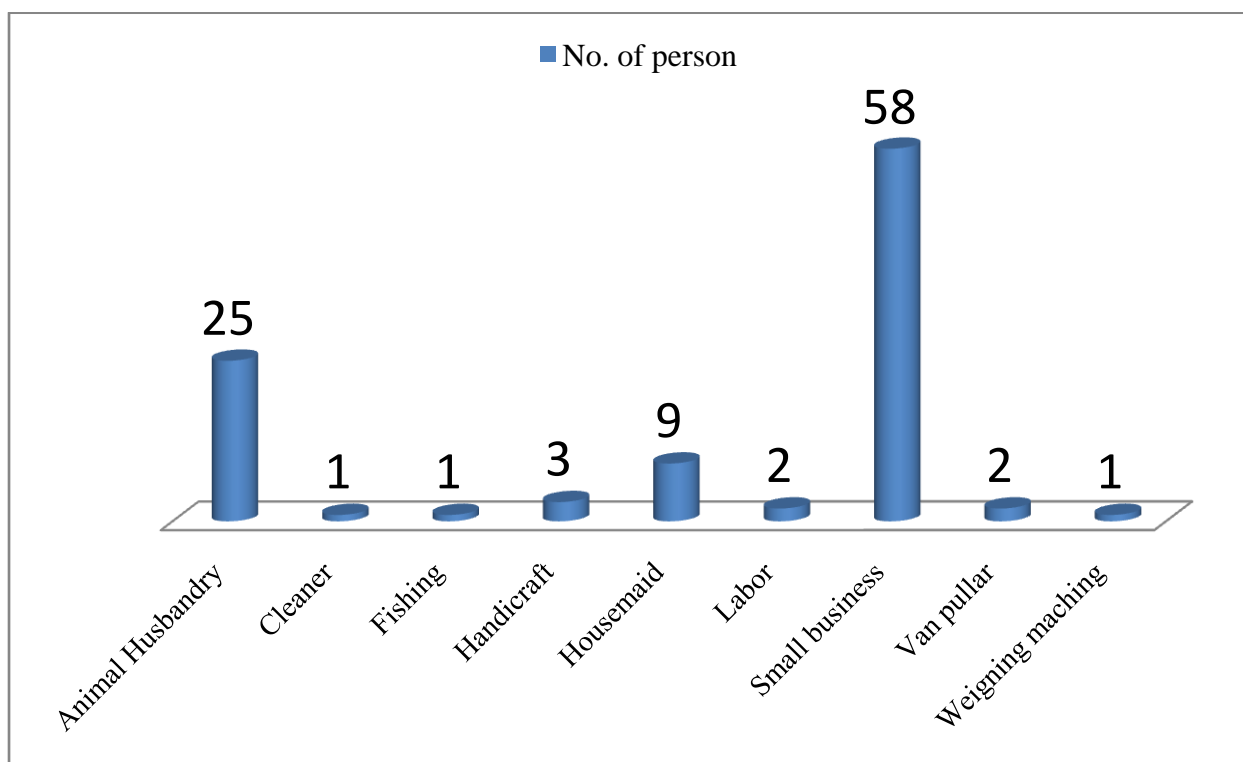
Name of Materials	Cows	Goat	Duck	Hen	Sewing Machine	Van Cart	Small Shops	Weighing Machine
Number of Materials	6	309	910	290	6	13	272	36
Number of Rehabilitates	6	269	135	80	6	13	272	36

Data source: Mainstreaming for Development: Beggar-free Narail District, 2017

The table shows that number of beneficiaries of small shops is highest and it's heterogeneous types. Some of them have fixed shop, most of them are vendors. Earlier they were moving with bags for taking something, now they are moving with bags/baskets but those are full of commodity like second hands cloths, boiled eggs, fruits, learning materials, pea nut, vegetables and such types of necessary items. Latest report states sheeps, and more items were given from rehabilitation fund as well as from Ekti Bari Ekti Khamar samitee. Some of them were given training to utilize the materials and most of them are not. Most of the rehabilitated persons are very caring about their inputs, they are busy with them. They are adding value by increasing the number of goats, ducks, and hens. Present Agriculture Minister Begum Motia Chowdhury said, "if you give 1 taka to the farmers, farmers will produce 10 taka by their production activities". Here are also multiplier effect, demonstrative effect, spillover effect, positive externalities etc. Nobel Laureates Dr. Muhammad Yunus has rightly said little support can help to come out from that neglected profession.

#### 4.1.1 Present Profession

The following diagram shows the present profession of the rehabilitated persons in the district.

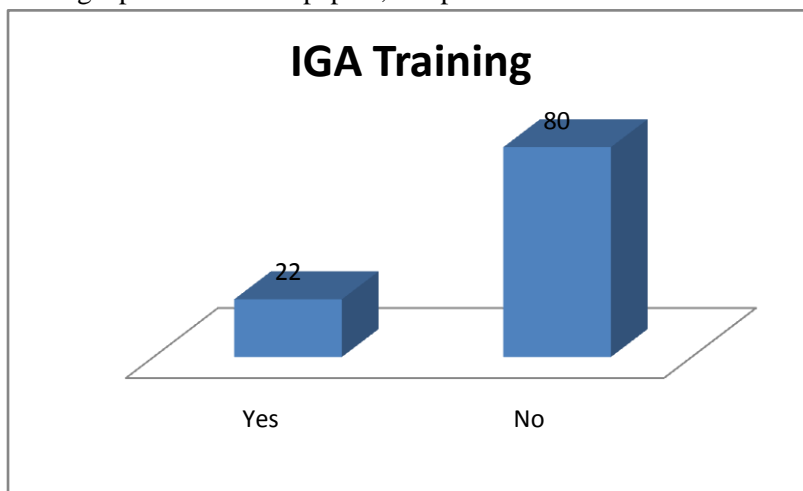


The collected data shows that all of them are somewhat engaged in profession for income generating activities. Earlier they were moving door to door for seeking help. 58 rehabilitated persons are engaged in small business which includes selling cloths, vegetables, fruits, nut, learning materials, stationary item and

small trading shops in the village. 25 persons are involved with animal husbandry that is hen, duck, goat, sheep, cow rearing. 9 persons are housemaid, Some of them work in other house and some work at their own house. There are also cross cutting profession, some of them are engaged in goat raring as well as small shop at his home. Some of their shop located near school, they sell food items, stationary and also provide service weighing machine.

#### 4.1.2 Training for Income Generating Activities:

District Administration Narail imparted training to the rehabilitated persons in a small scale. The contents were awareness building, duck-hen raring, animal husbandry, small business, vegetable cultivation, making packet with papers, capital formation etc. and how to earn with small capital.



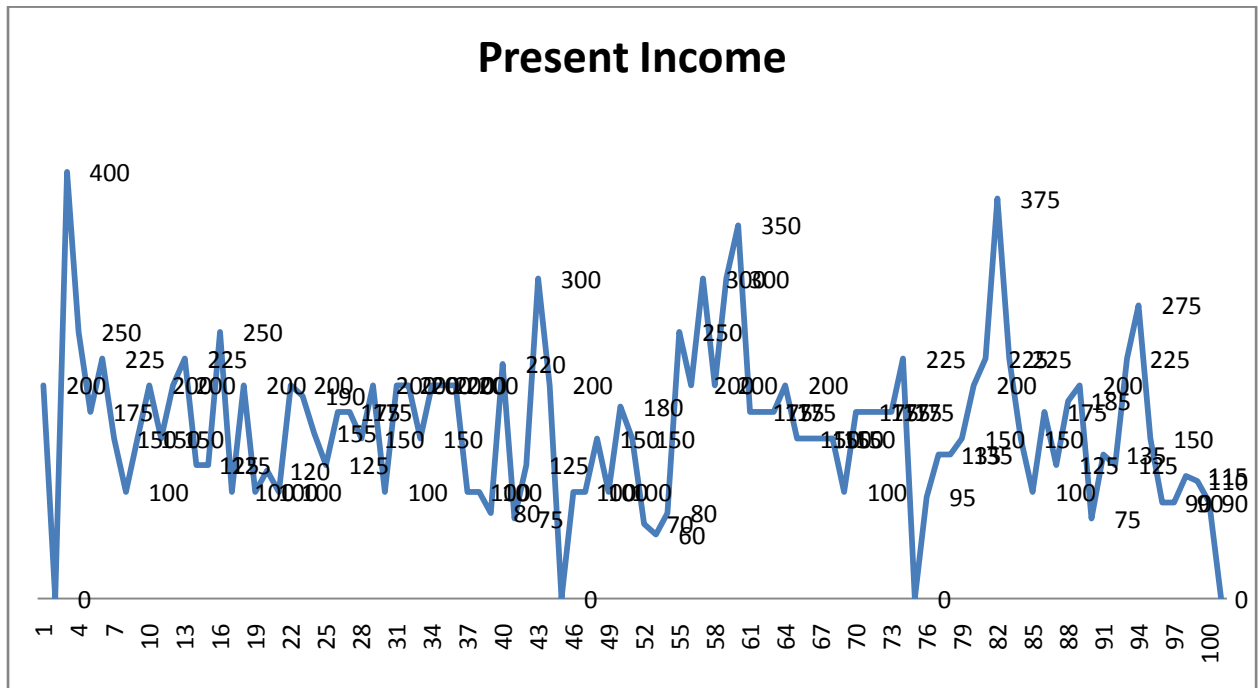
The collected data shows that out of 102 rehabilitated persons 80 did not get any training, only 22 got training. That means only 22 percent got training for income generating activities. But published report states that 275 rehabilitated persons out of 798 have got training. There is a little difference in between the two figures. One reason may be training was urban based. Those who live in municipal area they got priority but data was collected from almost every union field assistant of Ekti Bari Ekti Khamar. Data collected from municipal area is only. Because there is no field assistant working in urban area.

#### 4.1.3 Income by Using Productive Power

Before rehabilitation, they were not working rather begging. They did not take part in any productive activities. Rather they were creating public nuisance in some extent. Their strength, productive power, intelligence, human qualities, working capacity etc. were unused. They didn't know how to be self employed, self reliant and self dependent. The beggar rehabilitation initiatives opened the eyes of the rehabilitated persons. As one of rehabilitees, Rabeya, Chacuri, stated that it opened her eyes to come out from defamatory profession as her children were growing up, their daughter has to be married. It would be difficult to manage bride for her daughter as her husband is beggar. They were known as beggars but now my husband's identity is self employed / activist or small businessman which are prestigious to our community, relatives as well as society. Success story of Saki Begum can be mentioned here. Saki was begging in Kalna ferryghat, she did not know that she had potentiality. After getting motivation and small capital she started selling of boiled eggs at the same place. Her present earning is no less than that of previous one. The difference is that now she is using her intelligence, potential productive power. Another self reliant activist Momta, Narail, lives on the bank of the Chitra river, she was given small support from Narail District Council, now her earning is sufficient to run her family with her disable husband. She said, "I spend profit only for my family's day to day expenditure, I don't touch my original capital". Laili

Begum from Pankbila explained that they are happy with the governments; they need no more help from government side. Their every day income is 200 to 300 taka which makes her children enthusiastic and courageous towards self sufficient.

The following chart shows their daily average income:



The above data chart shows that out of 102 rehabilitees only 3 persons cannot earn of their own. They depend on government social safety net protections as well as the income of other’s member of their family. Rest 99 persons are working and earning. The chart shows that minimum earning is taka 60 where as maximum is taka 400. Most of their earning is in between 150 to 200 taka. The average daily income is 164 taka which is equivalent to 2 US\$.

#### 1.4 Health Supportive Income

One of the interviewee, Tarikul, weighing machine operator, Lahuria, Lohagora, now feels better. He said, “I feel better now, my health condition supports me, I sit in certain place with weighing machine using signboard, people see signboard and measure weight and give the price not mercy”. It should be mentioned here that contents of signboard is “Not begging, cooperate after measuring weight”. Tarikul also said, “My wife gets 30 kg rice per month and also I disable allowances 1800 every three months by which we can run our family smoothly”.

#### 4.2 Changes in Social Dignity

The second objective of the study was to assess is there any change in social dignity by the rehabilitation initiatives? Self realization, people’s perception, attendance in government programs, access to public sector’s service, training for capacity development, satisfaction and happiness with present conditions, unwillingness to go back to the begging, etc. have been considered to measure the social dignity.

##### 4.2:1 Rehabilitation works as tool to bring From Dark to Light

One of the interviewee, Liton sheikh, currently small business man, Maizpara, expressed his satisfaction and said “the rehabilitation has brought me from dark to light” and he asked, “Why this initiative has not implemented before to bring back from begging?”. He thinks that although begging has more income but

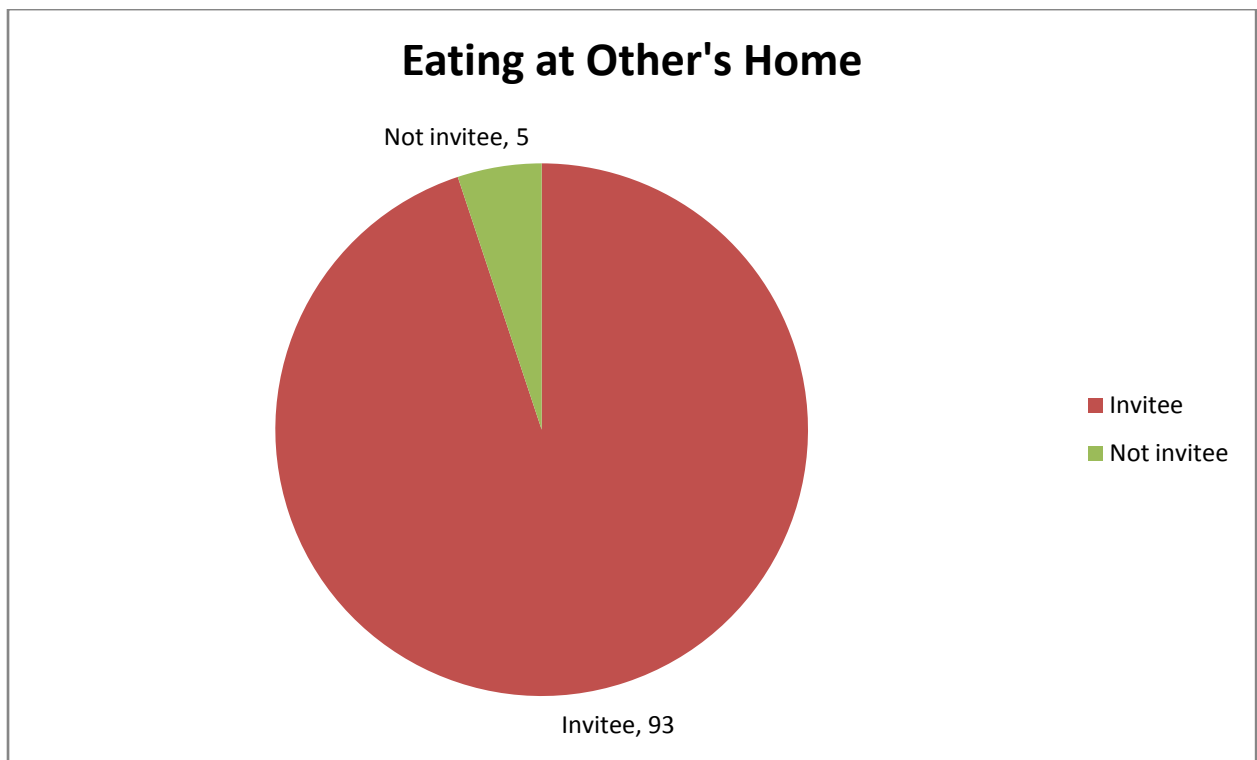


income from working has peace and happiness. He describes, currently people love him, Allah loves him because of working instead of begging. It is pertinent to mention here that, Liton Sheikh is a man with disability. He cannot see anybody or the world. He used to begging in the bus near Muchirpole bus station. Just after getting a little support and love from district administration, that liton is selling nut amounting taka 700 to 1000. His two sons are students. Now, he looks smiling.

#### 4.2.2 Self Realization

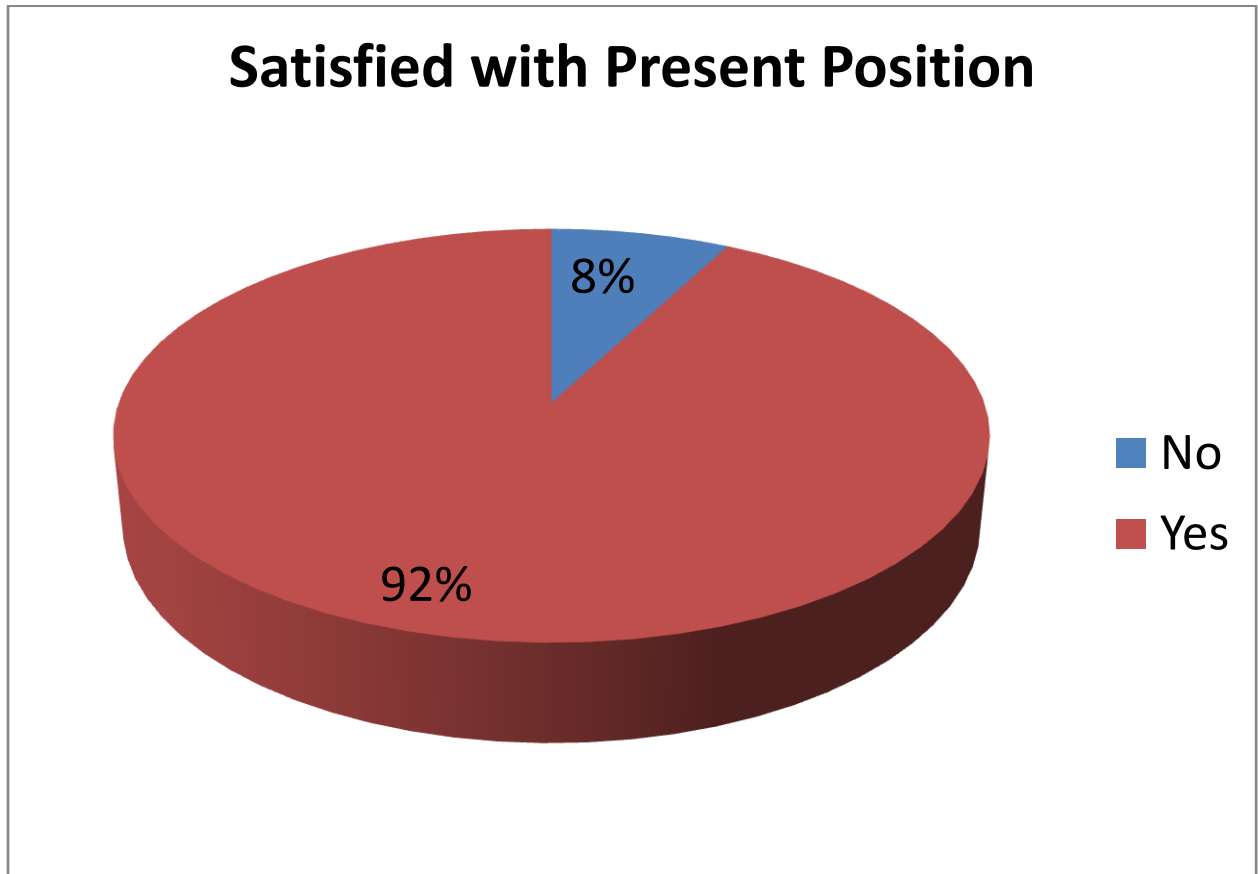
Another interviewee, Prokash Ghosh, Babra Hasla, said, “Now I am happy, for my previous beggary I feel hated, I never go back to begging, everybody looks me with the eyes of honor”. Prokash is also eye sighted disable who was begging in Baroipara ghat, now he is selling nut, chanachur, khata at the same place and living his happy life with his family members. Amodi Begum, 75 years old lady expressed her feelings in this way that she is no more beggar, she introduced herself as small trader. Her widow daughter works as housemaid in a student mess and her widow grant daughter is now entrepreneur of Narail District Council Digital Centre. They are living together with happiness.

#### 4.2.3 Eating at Others Home



Eating at other's home is being considered as an indicator of social dignity. In autarky situation beggars need not any invitation, without invitation they attend at others home on the occasion, out of the occasion, wait there, sit in the floor, they were being treated as an unwelcome visitors. But after rehabilitation the situation has been changed a lot. Survey data shows that out of 102 rehabilitated persons 93 do not go to others home for eating without invitation. They attend to death anniversary, marriage ceremony, eid festival or any other party only when are being invited. Like other guests they sit in the chair not on floor, now they don't eat residual part. One of the interviewee said, “we don't get beggars to distribute meat on Eid-ul-Adha day since they don't come. We distributed qurbani meat by going their home with my car”. This is fact which indicates social dignity of the rehabilitated person has gone up.

#### 4.2.4 Satisfaction level with their Present Conditions



One of the survey questions was is he or she is satisfied with present conditions? Out of 102 persons 92 rehabilitees answered positively meaning they are satisfied with their present position but 8 persons expressed about their dissatisfaction.

#### 4.2.5 Arrangement of Special Programs to Honour them

District Administration Narail and all upazla administrations arranged ifter party to honour the rehabilitated persons during the month of holy Ramadan. Before rehabilitation initiatives they did not took such type of opportunity to have prestigious invitation by Deputy Commissioner and official of the district level. In the Upazila level, UNO organized the Ifter party and have ifter with them. They normally could not get the scope to sit in the chair-table before UNO, DC, political leaders and member of civil society. On EID day, the rehabilitated persons have been invited to have food with Deputy Commissioner and Upazila Nirbahi Officer. This is the way to share of enjoyment and happiness of eid with poor people.

#### 4.2.7 Findings

From the analysis, it is crystal clear that they are using their latent productive power which was unutilized beforehand. Now they are exploiting their inherent capability to produce goods and services to lead their lives. The data shows that their average income is above 164 taka which is equivalent to US\$ 2. World

Bank defines US\$ 2 is above poverty line (hardcore). So, they are now above poverty line. With increased income their social identification has been changed, they are now called small businessmen, entrepreneurs, self dependant activists nor beggars. They have keys to enhance their status like productive power, farms, business, bank balance what not. Somebody has to invite cordially to feed them. They are getting equitable treatment in government and non government office, schools and hospital. There is no humiliation from any corner. Government good looks upon them. Finally the study shows:

- (a) Their productivity has been increased;
- (b) Their social dignity has been enhanced ;

#### **4.2.8 Challenges**

Although the rehabilitation initiatives have enhanced their productive capacity and social dignity, still there is few challenge to make the initiatives perfect and successful one. Few challenges are described below:

- To be included in social safety net protection and materials, new beggars are created;
- Few habitual beggars eat materials, sell, destroy and demand financial help repeatedly;
- Beggars have tendency to migrate from one district to another district;
- They change the style of begging for example they seek help for treatment, for daughter's marriage, children's educational expenses etc.;
- People who donate beggars normally, frequently and unplanned way, they are not interested to donate in bank account or in a certain places or accumulate at home and give it in planned way to promote at least one family;
- Shortage of people for monitoring exclusively;
- A lots of GO-NGO organization work for poverty alleviation but they don't work for beggars rehabilitation;
- There is no VGD, EGPP, activities of Ekti Bari Ekti Khamar to address the beggars who live in urban area;

### **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

#### **5.1. Conclusion**

From the above discussions it can be said that the study has found positive change. Although some of their income has been reduced but their present income is being earned by exploiting their potential productive power which was dormant. The satisfaction and happiness is more at their hard earned income than begging income. From collected data it is found that average income is 164 taka which is equivalent to 2 US\$ that is above hardcore poverty line determined by World Bank. In case of social dignity, the study found that they have grown self realization, self actualization, self prestige. Because before rehabilitation they would go to other's home, party to have meal without invitation. Sometimes they were humiliated, but after rehabilitation they don't go to other's home, now they sit in the chair-table like other invited guests. People do not call them beggar. Access to government office has been increased, they are getting quick and hassle free service.

## 5.2. Recommendations and ways to implement the recommendations

On the basis of findings and challenges a set of recommendations and ways to implement the recommendations are discussed in the following way:

SL	Recommendations	The Ways to Implement
1	SMART action plan to be undertaken by individuals or organization (IAP or Team action plan) to rehabilitate at least on beggar family	Including annual performance agreement of organizations as well as individuals can implement.
2	Rules, Regulations, Policies should be relaxed for beggars to include all and give more protections	Verifying the necessity/ground reality concerned Ministry, Division and Directorate can do it
3	Social Safety Net Protections like VGD, EGPP, EBK etc. to be incorporated in the municipal/urban area to achieve Vision20 21 and SDGs 2030	Preparing a database Municipalities or City Corporation can do it. Allocation by the government may be needed at the initial stage.
4	Allocate home and give khas land for homeless and landless beggars respectively	Giving settlement of khas land or setting up multi-storied building Ashrayan-2 project can
5	Give priority to the beggars in all poverty alleviation programs	Preparing database of beggars and poor categorically
6	Beggars rehabilitation can be an indicator for performance evaluation of elected representatives	A certificate is to be placed which contains no more beggar is in his constituency
7	Involve NGOs for rehabilitation of beggars	Making precondition to get permission
8	Ensure monitoring by GO-NGO combined efforts	Sending monthly report to the higher authority
9	Take legal action for professional beggars	Conducting mobile court
10	Integrate begging parents with their sons	Through motivation and legal action
11	Stop child marriage, dowry, violence against women and drug addiction	Creating awareness, motivation and legal action as situation demands

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