

**129TH ADVANCED COURSE ON ADMINISTRATION
AND DEVELOPMENT, BPATC, SAVAR, DHAKA.**



SEMINAR PAPER

On

**Beneficiary Selection Process in Vulnerable Group Development
Program, Guideline versus Practice- An Overview at Naldanga
Upazila in Natore District.**

Prepared by

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Submitted to

Dr. Md Mohoshin Ali

Director, BPATC

and

Module Coordinator, Module No.02.B

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Abstract:

Inception of the famine in 1974, the Government of Bangladesh in collaboration with WFP started VGD program and till today, it continues to be a humanitarian assistance program that provides food & livelihood training to the poor. According to World Bank report- Bangladesh made remarkable progress of lifting 16 million people out of poverty because of its increasing trend of budget allocation in the previous years. To address food insecurity and reduce poverty, Government of Bangladesh has taken a lot of initiatives as social safety net programmes. Government has taken a good number of safety net programs during the last four decades. It has been implementing 145 programs under the social safety net initiatives of different ministries. Among those Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) programme is one of the largest programmes with development orientation. It is mainly a food aid programme which targets at the poor and vulnerable women of the country. Under VGD programme, at present, a number of 10.40 lakh women receives a monthly food aid of 30 kg rice packed in a bag combined with a package of development services for a cycle of 24(twenty four) months followed by the selection process of VGD guideline 2011. Government is striding on its way to recognized as a middle income country by 2024. But 41% of the population is still marked as poor and 16% as extreme poor according to UNDP Multi-dimensional Poverty Index 2018. So, to make its dream to reality, selection process of the beneficiaries will play vital role that needs to be transparent.

The study was conducted to assess the present scenario of VGD beneficiary selection process and to locate eligible / ineligible criteria based selection as per guideline. Research methodology was mainly data collection from primary sources and taking interviews of key persons. Findings from the study showed that 5% beneficiary was actually selected as per guideline and rest 95% selection was unjust and unauthentic. It also reveals that out of 05 eligible criteria most vulnerability was seen meeting the criteria EC1 (too much food insecurity) and EC5 (woman chief family/no male earner) 0% and 10% respectively. But in case of 04 ineligible criteria, data showed the magnitude of beneficiaries that satisfied ineligible criteria between 90 %(age limit 18 to 40) and 100% (currently received assistance from other program, was in past two cycle and teenager). Beneficiaries were found consistent to ineligible criteria but vulnerable to eligible criteria. Therefore, it expresses that a significant number of ineligible beneficiaries were included in VGD cycle. About commencement of public meeting, 90% of the beneficiaries answered negative whereas 45% of the selected beneficiaries answered that they had to make financial transactions (Tk 2000 to 5000) as bribe. Hence, criteria based selection process does not performing well due to some genuine causes. There are some loopholes and drawbacks in planning and implementation process of the programme.

To make VDG programme more effective for bringing positive changes in the lives of the poor households, some steps has to be taken by the government to make the selection process more transparent and accountable.

Key Words: VGD, Selection process, Eligible criteria, Ineligible criteria, Poor women, Poverty

1.0 Introduction:

1.1 Background of the Study:

At present, the number of people living below the poverty line in Bangladesh is estimated to be 35 million. The most remarkable consequence of wide spread poverty is that around one fourth of the country's population cannot afford an adequate meal. For this reason, Government of Bangladesh needs to implement social safety net programs as priority basis for protecting the ultra poor in its public policy. The safety net programs open avenues to the poor for transferring income and resources so that the incidence of poverty reduces. The basis of the safety net programs is to help poor persons, families and communities from income and meal uncertainty. Bangladesh has adopted a social security strategy in 2015. A total amount of Tk 642 billion was allocated from Government budget for social safety net programs in 2018 -2019. This allocation was almost 14% of the annual budget and 2.5% of the GDP (Nawshad Ahmed, 2019). Among this, about Tk 372 billion is being used to implement safety net programs as per globally recognized classification. They are in the form of cash allowances, public works, education and health incentives and vulnerable households which aim to contribute to fight against poverty and improving human capital.

Government has taken a good number of safety net programs during the last four decades. It has been implementing 145 programs under the social safety net initiatives of different ministries. Some of those targeted programs are: Rural Employment and Road Maintenance Program(RMP), Employment Generation Program for the Poorest(EGPP), Work for Money, Gratuitous Relief(GR), Test Relief(TR), Vulnerable Group Development/feeding(VGD/VGF), Honourium for Poor Freedom Fighters, Old Age allowance, Allowance for Widow and Distressed Women, Maternity allowance, Working Lactating allowance etc. Amongst these, VGD is one of the largest safety net programs of the Government of Bangladesh assisted by World food Program (WFP). This program is mainly food aid focused program that targets the poor and vulnerable women of the country. The ultimate goal of the program is to sustainable improvement to the lives of the ultra poor households.

As a humanitarian response to food insecurity in a war, feminine and natural disaster victims, the government of Bangladesh introduce VGF, food security based relief program in 1975. But in course of time, VGD is evolved to focus on helping poor women for graduating out of poverty line. Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) is responsible for planning, managing and coordinating of VGD program. Department of Women Affairs is the only implementing agency for VGD program with

the assistance of district and upazila administration and local government tiers in all levels. VGD activities are run on two year cycle. Currently 2019-2020 cycle is on operation in the field level and a number of 10.40 lakh women (10 lakh regular & 40 thousands special for Rohingya influx affected local community of Teknaf & Ukhia upazila under Cox'sBazar district) are provided VGD cards (one family, one card) under this program. Each of the VGD card holders receives a monthly food grain of 30 kg combined with a package of development training services. Each card holder is selected for a cycle of 24 months commencing from January of calendar and ending in December next year.

The main target group of the VGD is ultra poor and poor women for graduating them out of poverty line. Therefore, the most important role of VGD program is the selection process of the women to make it successful. Government is striding on its way to recognized as a middle income country by 2024. But 41% of the populations are still marked as poor and 16% as extreme poor according to UNDP Multi dimensional Poverty Index 2018 (Bipasha Dutta, 2019). So, to make its dream to reality, selection process of the beneficiaries has to be transparent. The process for the issuance of VGD cards usually begins with MoWCA, issuing a circular 4 months prior to the start each new cycle. The circular includes information on the allocation of VGD cards disaggregated by Upazila, the time line for VGD card enrolment from eligible women and guidelines for selection of VGD beneficiaries. Based on the allotted numbers, DWA then decides the district-wise allocation in consideration with the poverty situation in different districts of Bangladesh. Guideline based eligibility and ineligibility of the beneficiaries are as follows:

Eligibility criteria:

- From a household headed by a woman/ Widowed/ separated/deserted/divorced or has a husband who is unable to work;
- Has severe food insecurity;
- Landless or owns less than 0.15 acre of land;
- Has very low and irregular family income or works as casual labor;
- Low quality home condition.

Ineligibility criteria:

- Currently received assistance from other program;
- Was in past two cycles;
- Age limit (18-40 years);

• Teenager who looks after the family in absence of housewife.

A woman can become a VGD beneficiary only once and cannot simultaneously benefit from other development programs.

Government of Bangladesh may perform over all diagnostic study on VGD program in order to conduct operational and financial analysis for reform plan but may not only on selection criteria of the beneficiaries. This seminar paper is a little effort in this regard as a part of the training in ACAD course at BPATC.

1.2 Objectives of the Study:

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- a) To analyze the present situation of the VGD beneficiary selection process.
- b) To identify whether the beneficiaries of the VGD program are selected as per criteria of the guideline.
- c) To find out any other dimensions of VGD selection process.

1.3 Justification of the Study:

This topic is relevant to my current workplace and no study was done particularly in this regard previously. Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) and Department of Women Affairs (DWA) conducted some impact studies on the effectiveness of VGD program throughout the country by independent organizations but not on a specific area of VGD program. And therefore, the study is more relevant to choose on present context. The study will assess the scenario of the selection process of the VGD program focusing on theory (what is the policy & manual) and practices (what is practically done at implementation level) and will identify gaps and weakness and also opportunities for improvement.

Generally, a question is raised in different level of the civil society whether the beneficiaries are selected properly as per criteria? To locate the problems and available solutions of the addressed problems, this study is designed for Naldanga upazila in Natore district. The study will also reveal the dimension of irregularities if retains. Finally it is expected that the study will help to introduce policy and plans for the policy makers of MoWCA to ensure good governance that aligns with the SDG goal-01.

2.0 Literature Review:

2.1 Review of VGD budget allocation trend and sustainable development goal (SDG):

Inception of the famine in 1974, the Government of Bangladesh in collaboration with WFP started VGD program and till today, it continues to be a humanitarian assistance program that provides food & livelihood training to the poor. According to World Bank report- Bangladesh made remarkable progress of lifting 16 million people out of poverty because of its increasing trend of budget allocation in the previous years. Here is a scenario of last 5 years budget allocation.

Year wise budget allocation

Sl No.	Fiscal year	Allocation(Tk Crore)
1	2015-2016	1056.3429
2	2016-2017	1244.1134
3	2017-2018	1605.6979
4	2018-2019	1656.4531
5	2019-2020	1698.9070

Source: Annual Budget Book, Ministry of Finance

Trend of budget allocation is increasing to meet the SDG goal 01: End poverty in all its forms everywhere. To align with SDG, Government has set targets of reducing in the head-count poverty ratio by about 6.2 percentage points (from 24.8% to 18.6%) and reducing in extreme poverty by about 4.0 percentage points (i.e. 8.9% in 2020) and also spending on Social Protection as a share of GDP to be increased to 2.3%. Therefore, it is very much relevant to ensure the selection of beneficiaries as per criteria of the guideline neither Government will fail to fulfill mandate of SDG goal-01.

2.2 Review of various study report:

Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) and Department of Women Affairs conducted some impact studies on the effectiveness of VGD program throughout the country by independent organizations for VGD cycle 2009-2010. Monitoring Survey of the Vulnerable Group Development Activity of the World Food Program, Bangladesh by BIDS (2009-2010) where Mr. Abdul Hye Mondal commented that the Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) program and its associated development package made a positive impact on the VGD women other than non VGD women living in the same territory. The

impact is most prominent in case of food security and nutritional status of women and children. This report also added that the programme ultimately changed the behavior, communication skill and the quality of life of the poor.

Social Safety Nets in Bangladesh, Volume 2, Ground Realities and Policy Challenges (2012) by PPRC & UNDP, Hossain Zillur Rahman & Liaquat Ali Choudhury in terms of overall VGD performance stated that there were a number of pertinent issues in considering process realities. The researchers looked for the answers of the questions notably whether the implementation process was convenient and useful for beneficiary perspective or there was any leakage from the defined benefit or the delivery of benefits was timely or the beneficiaries had to rely on intermediaries to access their benefits or the quality of benefit package was satisfactory.

Scrutinizing inclusion and exclusion errors in VGD program of Bangladesh (2014) Mohammed Faruque Uddin, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Bangladesh noted that some variables like social facts and individual attributes were identified from the present VGD study which fosters inclusion and exclusion errors. Social network, elite capture, categorical identities, social status, partial and imperfect governance systems are the most prominent social facts.

Performance of Vulnerable Group Development towards food security, Bangladesh Agric. (2018) 22 (2) : 21-28, an article by M. S. I. Afrad, A. A. Barau, and Ann found that the beneficiaries were confronted by a variety of problems among which untimely distribution, inadequate provision, low quality of food and political biasness were the key. This article showed that majority of the beneficiaries were in 31-50 years, illiterate (85.0%), had holdings (≤ 15 decimal), had family size (3-5 members) and faced absolute poverty but mostly reported satisfactory performance of VGD towards food security.

Impact Evaluation of Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) Program in Bangladesh (19 May, 2012) by Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) prepared by M. A. Mannan, Badrun Nessa Ahmed cited that three-fifths (57.69%) of the VGD cardholders were of the opinion that selection was fair enough for all the cardholders, while about two-fifths (38.22%) maintain that selection was fair for some of the cardholders only. By contrast, less than a fifth (17.02%) of non-beneficiaries maintain that selection was fair for all of the cardholders, while a vast majority (70%) of the non-beneficiaries were of the opinion that only some of the cardholders belong to eligible group. About three-fourths (67.4%) of VGD households were headed by males, while only 32.6% households were female-headed. Similarly, 69.9% of non-beneficiary households were male-headed and the rest 30.1% were headed by females. This paper also revealed the serious weakness of VGD programme which was inadequate inclusion. Many eligible women who meet criteria but left out because of limited number of beneficiaries' provision and shortage of fund.

Report on participatory food security policy mapping in Bangladesh by RDRS (2018) inferred that a lot of other marginalized groups are not targeted in vulnerable group feeding and vulnerable group development programmes. So, there needs to be a restructuring of the state food provisioning programmes in order to include several other economically and socially marginalized groups into the provisioning schemes.

Efficiency of targeted food programs: an investigation of the VGD and RD programs. (FRMSP Working Paper no. 3) by Del Ninno, C. (2000) attempted to document the political dimensions of the achievements of Bangladesh's VGD programme since its inception in the 1970s. It describes how the programme has evolved and responded to new ideas and ideologies relating to gender and development over time, and sketches out the main political relationships and interests supporting its establishment, its evolution and continuing support.

Department of Economics, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Sylhet, Bangladesh, used cross-sectional survey data from Sylhet District in Bangladesh to review and evaluate the impact of VGD program on household welfare. The report commented that VGD program had a clear success on protection goal which raised per capita expenditure significantly among the beneficiary households.

The above studies revealed the overall effectiveness of VGD program as one of the largest social safety net programmes of the Government and recommended for further development of the program. But there was no specific study on VGD beneficiary selection process for the socio-economic development of the country.

3.0 Methodology:

The study was performed following by a qualitative methodology approach which included collecting and analyzing primary research. A detailed questionnaire was set for collecting primary data from the beneficiaries of the 2019-2020 cycles in the field level in Naldanga upazila in Natore district. The beneficiaries of the 2019-2020 cycle was 20 (twenty) and taken by random sampling design. This upazila consists of 05 unions, 04 beneficiaries were selected from each union. A review work was also done with secondary documents. Besides these, a Key Informant Interview (KII) was conducted with relevant officials in the said upazila. The inclusion of the officials was Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO), Deputy Director, DWA, Upazila Women Affairs Officer (UWAO) and 03 relevant local public representatives like Union Parishad Chairman by a questionnaire format. Then collected data was organized in a table for further analysis and recommendation.

Data Organization Table:

Sl No	Name of the beneficiaries	Eligibility Criteria(EC) (VGD Guideline 2011)						Ineligibility Criteria(INEC) (VGD Guideline 2011)					Eligible (Y/N)	Public meetin g held (Y/N)	Enlist ment proce ss	Bribe transac tion (Tk)
		Too much food insecurity(at least one meal intake omitted/ day)	Landless/ owner of less than 0.15 acre	Low quality home condition	Day labourer/ little income/ no specific income source	Woman chief family/n o male earner	Currently received assistance from other program	Was in past two cycle	Age limit (18-40 years)	Teen ager						
		EC1	EC2	EC3	EC4	EC5	INEC1	INEC2	INEC3	INEC4						
1	Pratima Rani Das	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	47	x	N	N	a*	x		x
2	Chandana Rani Das	X	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	34	x	N	N	a*	x		x
3	Mst Shomela Begum	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	37	x	Y	N	a*	x		x
4	Panna Rani	X	✓	x	x	x	x	x	37	x	N	N	a*	x		2000
5	Mst Anju Ara	X	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	40	x	N	N	a*	x		x
6	Mst Rozina	X	✓	x	x	x	x	x	38	x	N	N	a*	x		5000
7	Mst Komela	X	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	38	x	N	N	a*	x		3000
8	Mst Sabina	X	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	32	x	N	N	a*	x		x
9	Mst Arzina Begum	X	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	42	x	N	N	a*	x		3000
10	Mst Arifa Khatun	X	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	26	x	N	N	a*	x		x
11	Mst Dalima Begum	X	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	32	x	N	N	a*	x		x
12	Mst Mariam Bibi	X	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	36	x	N	N	a*	x		3000
13	Mst Muslima	X	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	40	x	N	N	a*	x		x
14	Mst Sonia	X	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	35	x	N	N	a*	x		x
15	Mst Kohinur	X	✓	x	x	x	x	x	35	x	N	N	a*	x		3000
16	Mst Zemi Khatun	X	✓	x	x	x	x	x	22	x	N	N	a*	x		3000
17	Mst Salma Begum	X	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	35	x	N	N	a*	x		x
18	Mst Habiba Begum	X	✓	x	x	x	x	x	32	x	N	N	a*	x		5000
19	Mst Shymoli Khatun	X	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	30	x	N	N	a*	x		3000
20	Mst Rasheda Khatun	x	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	29	x	N	N	a*	x		x
No. of beneficiaries that meet criteria		0	20	5	14	2	20	20	18	0	1	20	20	20	9	
% of beneficiaries that meet criteria		0%	100%	25%	70%	10%	100%	100%	90%	0%	5%	100%	100%	100%	45%	

a* selected by local public representative

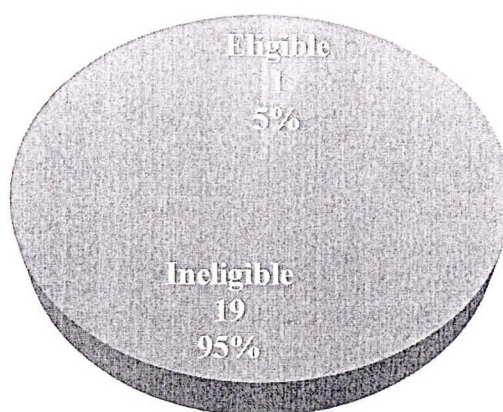
4.0 Data Analysis and Findings:

Primary raw data were collected from the beneficiaries of the current cycle 2019-2020 by a questionnaire format. Then data were organized according to the criteria set by Government which represent eligibility and ineligibility of the beneficiaries in the above Data Organization Table. This organization of data had generated information for analysis.

4.1 Overall Selection situation analysis:

According to VGD manual or guideline 2011, Government of Bangladesh sets 05 eligible criteria for selecting VGD beneficiaries and side by side also mentions 04 ineligible criteria. For inclusion in VGD cycle, one beneficiary must fulfil at least 04 eligible criteria and even must not meet any of the 04 ineligible criteria. A pie chart has been drawn from the information generated in Data Organization Table.

Beneficiary Selection Status



■ Eligible ■ Ineligible

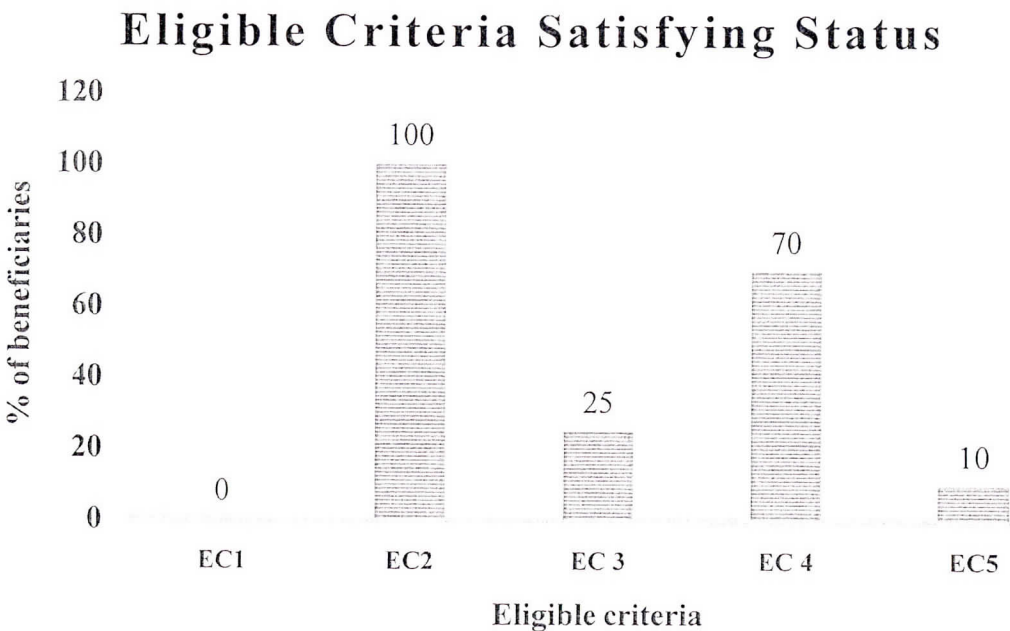
The above pie chart presents only 5% (1 out of 20) of beneficiaries could satisfy both eligible and ineligible criteria but rest 95% (19 out of 20) could not meet Government set criteria. It meant 5% beneficiary was actually selected as per guideline and rest 95% selection was unjust and unauthentic.

This trend of selection process is incurring government resource loss and deviating the objectives of the social safety net program. From the above selection situation several precision may be drawn-

- a. whether VGD selection committee fails to reach the actual/real beneficiaries or
- b. whether this category of beneficiaries becomes unavailable or
- c. whether the poverty status of the country upgraded or
- d. whether VGD selection committee does not keep attention on the set criteria while selecting beneficiaries or
- e. whether the criteria itself becomes obsolete/tough because of current poverty condition of the country.

4.2 Eligible criteria analysis:

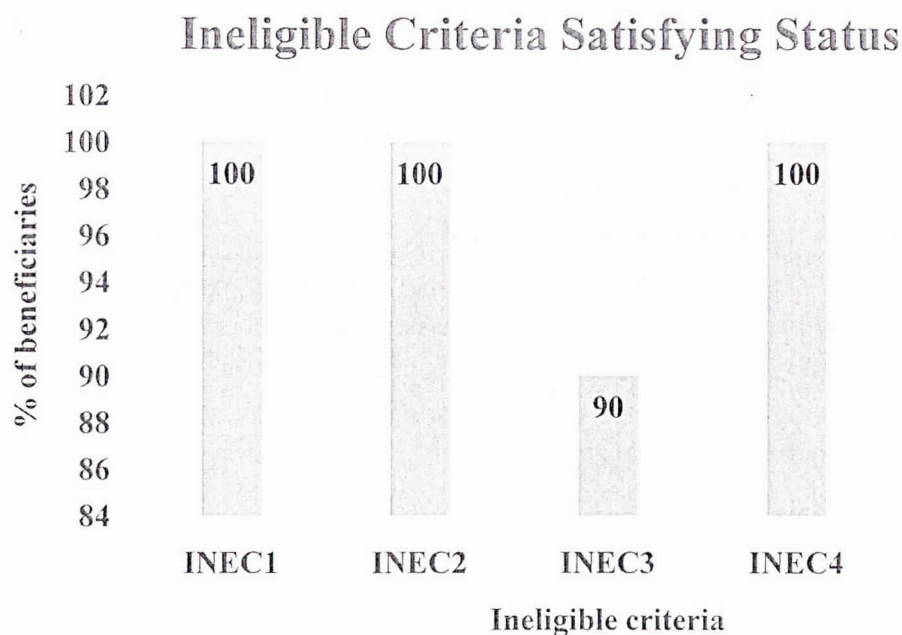
Data Organization Table generated information for five eligible criteria. Now, these data were set in a comparative bar graph to look into the situation of the set criteria by the Government.



The above graph shows the criteria wise status of beneficiary selection. Among the selected beneficiaries of VGD cycle 2019-2020, 100% (20 out of 20) beneficiaries could meet the eligible criteria EC2 (landless/owner of less than 0.15 acre). But minimum 0% (20 out of 20) and 10% beneficiaries could meet the eligible criteria EC1 (too much food insecurity) and EC5 (woman chief family/ no male earner) respectively where as eligible criteria EC4 (day labourer/little income/no specific income source) were almost moderately 70% met by the beneficiaries. Only 5% (1 out of 20) beneficiaries could satisfy the eligible criteria. It was evident that eligible criteria EC1 and EC5 were the worst/toughest criteria that could not be fulfilled by the beneficiaries. Therefore, Government should have a look on these toughest criteria. In this situation, a prediction may be drawn throughout the analysis that Government should identify the tough/obsolete criteria and should take necessary step to revise it for better performance.

4.3 Ineligible criteria analysis:

As per VGD guideline 2011, satisfying any one of the 04 ineligible criteria will incur a beneficiary out of inclusion in VGD. Data Organization Table depicted a bar graph which refers ineligibility scenario of the beneficiaries.



The above bar graph revealed that 100% of the beneficiaries met ineligible criteria INEC1 (currently received assistance from other program), INEC2 (was in past two

cycles) and INEC4 (teenager) and minimum 90% met ineligible criteria INEC3 (age limit 18 to 40). The graph shows the magnitude of beneficiaries that satisfied ineligible criteria between 90 % and 100%. Therefore it revealed that a significant number of beneficiaries could satisfy the ineligible criteria and no vulnerability was detected in case of ineligible criteria. In this context, an inference may be drawn that VGD committee keeps attention on ineligible criteria.

4.4 Commencement of public meeting analysis:

According to VGD guideline 2011, union VGD committee will form a 04 member's small group and that group will announce public meeting in the ward area for selecting VGD beneficiaries correctly as per guideline. Information provided by the Data Organization Table it is found that 100% of the selected beneficiaries of the current cycle 2019-2020 answered negative about the commencement of public meeting before selection. It meant that most important and transparent process of selection had been omitted from the selection procedure.

4.5 Financial transaction analysis:

Items	Finanancial transaction (Tk) / other benefit						Total transacti on (Tk)	Average transacti on(Tk)	Maxi mum/ mini mum
	No Tk	Tk 1000- 2000	Tk 2001- 3000	Tk 3001- 4000	Tk 4001- 5000	Other benefit			
No. of beneficiaries	11	1	6	0	2	0	30000	3333	5000/ 2000
% of beneficiaries	55%	45%				-	-	-	-

The above table revealed another dimension of the VGD selection process. It was found that 45% of the selected beneficiaries had to give Taka as bribe and rest 55% maintained no. The amount varies from minimum Tk 2000 to maximum Tk 5000 and most of them had to pay Tk 3000. The average financial transaction amount was Tk 3333. Hence, financial transaction plays a vital role in the selection process at root level. As a result, many ineligible beneficiaries became capable of placing themselves in the list of VGD cycle 2019-2020.

4.6 Opinions of the Key Persons:

a) Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO):

UNO of Naldanga, Natore mentioned that Government set criteria for beneficiary selection is sufficient enough. Local representatives at union level did the primary selection and they gave priority to their dearness around and own circle. He also added that selection was done on the public meeting and in that case, there needed more campaign in the area.

b) Deputy Director (DD), DWA:

DD, DWA Natore district said that application for beneficiary selection was taken by online and that were assessed on the score. If any selection faced unfair means, it needed to cancel for new selection and then had to face troubles. Online application process saved time and local hazards.

c) Upazila Women Affairs Officer(UWAO):

The core implementing officer UWAO noted that criteria were as well but union committee did not follow and response timely. Sometimes, money transaction issue came to the office door having no proof. The beneficiary list needed to be approved timely by the specific committee.

d) Union Parishad Chairman:

Three union parishad chairmen maintain the opinion that criteria that set by the Government were enough but needed correct selection in open meeting in the presence of upazila and union committee. One of them added that some requests and social obstacles retained over there.

e) Executive Director(ED), Nida Society:

ED, Nida Society commented that as beneficiary selection process maintained by online so there were no chances of anomalies. So far her knowledge, financial transaction might not happen but needed to follow guideline.

5.0 Result and Discussion:

Only 5% beneficiary was actually selected as per guideline and rest 95% selection was unjust and unauthentic. Beneficiaries were found much vulnerable to 03 eligible criteria i.e too much food insecurity (0%, having 03 meals/day), woman chief family/no male earner (10%, widow-1, having husband 19 where 1 cannot earn and rest 18 earns Tk 100-400/day) and low quality home condition (25%, tin shed house, cement pole, sanitary latrine and 5 have building) but much consistent to criteria landless/owner of less than 0.15 acre (100%, landless 1, only homestead 19, 2-6 decimals) and moderate to the criteria day labourer/little income/no specific income source (70%). On the other hand, beneficiaries were too consistent to ineligible criteria (90%-100%). In that case, VGD committees needed to be active for cross checking verification. Most of the women were housewife with a family size of 2-4 and irregular little earning Tk 30-50/day from poultry and cattle rearing. It is evident that there is no food insecurity and low home condition in the country. People are migrating from the level of poor and ultra poor to upper economic class. Here it depicts another clear picture of family size (2-4) and engagement of women on earning leading to low total fertility rate for demographic dividend. The data showed that beneficiaries were 100% selected through public representative intervention but not through public meeting. Sometimes there might happen money transaction amounted to Tk 2000-5000. It meant that public representatives did not heed to people and also to government set criteria.

The key persons maintained the opinions that government criteria were sufficient but in maximum cases it was not followed. Local representatives prioritized their dear ones and own circle for beneficiary selection and there might happen money transaction but no proof. Some of them said presently applications were taken by online and so there might no chances of anomalies. Observation on Online application form found that the form did not follow all criteria, it covered only 03 eligible criteria and all 04 ineligible criteria. Therefore, and in practical the situation is much worse.

6.0 Recommendations:

1. Government needs to review the selection criteria in VGD guideline to see the insight whether some criteria itself becomes obsolete because of the up gradation of current poverty status of the country.
2. Three (03) eligible criteria (Too much food insecurity/Low quality home condition/Woman chief family, no male earner) need to be reviewed and changed according to present socio-economic status.

3. Emphasis needs to be given in public meeting to make selection process more transparent.
4. Emphasis needs to be given on monitoring and evaluation system.
5. Online application form should follow guideline with sufficient information.
6. VGD committees need to be active enough for cross checking verification.
7. Emphasis needs to be given on preparing poverty database and poverty map of the country.
8. Scientific mechanism like Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) should be developed for targeting and selection of beneficiaries.
9. Government needs to conduct a comprehensive study on VGD selection process to locate the problems.
10. Quota allocation and card allotment should strictly follow the criteria of food insecurity and intensity of poor as per guideline or poverty mapping.
11. VGD beneficiary selection process should comply with the guideline.

7.0 Conclusion:

Poverty alleviation is the key challenge for Bangladesh. The percentage of people living below the poverty line is decreasing day by day, but still we have to go a long way although Bangladesh is carefully handling poverty challenge with efficiency. By 2030, we have to reduce hardcore poverty line below 3% and poverty line below 10%. To achieve this target, VGD programme can play a vital role performing better beneficiary selection. With a view to graduating the poor households from poverty and empowering women both Government and Non-Government should work together.

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