Issues and Perspectives in Business and Social Sciences

Hurdles NGOs Face When Fostering Education Among Indigenous Communities in Chittagong Hill Tracts

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Abstract

Education enables indigenous children to exercise and enjoy economic, social and cultural rights. However, they are often marginalized and discriminated against when it comes to accessing education as compared to the non-indigenous children. This is well reflected among the indigenous community children in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) situated in Bangladesh. After the signing of the peace accord, several development programmes had been employed by NGOs to foster education among the indigenous children. However, despite their immense efforts, there still tends to be an inadequacy in the progress of these indigenous children's education attainment. NGOs face several challenges when reaching out to the indigenous communities. Hence, to study the challenges that NGOs face, a qualitative approach was used to understand and investigate the broader picture. Purposive sampling was used to determine the informants and gain insights from the perspective of six chosen NGO officers followed by a thorough in-depth interview to further fulfil the objective of this research. Qualitative thematic analysis was the main approach to data analysis. The findings revealed that geographical barriers, the violent conflicts and the psychology of the indigenous community itself pose a challenge that affects the indigenous students' attainment in education. The language barrier is also some of the other challenges NGOs face. Based on these findings, a few recommendations were developed followed by suggestions on other potential research topics that may open up a platform for better focus on the educational development aspect of indigenous children in CHT.

1. Introduction

Education brings changes towards a person's daily life and enables him/her to select the best option for his/her personal life. However, while there has been an exceptional decrease in the number of out-of-school children worldwide, from nearly 100 million in 2000 to 58 million in 2015, it is nearly certain that third world developing countries have not achieved the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of universal primary education (UNICEF, 2015).

According to Lochner (2011), evidence amassed suggests that investment in education intensifies workers' productivity, grows their incomes, consequently leading to the flourishing of the economy of these developing countries. However, a substantial amount of the population in third world developing countries such as Bangladesh, India and Pakistan continue to suffer from poverty and are incapable of investing in education (Kremer et al., 2015). A worse fate is suffered by the indigenous communities in these countries as they are not exposed to modern and innovative techniques that are vital to augment productivity among educated youth, essential for overall development (Anuradha et al., 2013).

As ILO (2016) depicts, indigenous communities are one of the keys to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in terms of reducing poverty and promoting quality education. This is supported by Gakidou (2014), who found that in most developing countries, progress for indigenous groups in achieving universal education has not been as noticeable as compared to mainstream groups. Approximately half of the indigenous children in just 12 countries are out of school of which 8 are in sub-Saharan Africa. He further added that in 2011, 25.5% of indigenous boys aged from 15 to 19 had completed their primary education as compared to 16.7% of indigenous girls in Paraguay. There is at least a 5% to 10% of indigenous children who are not in schools even in prosperous countries such as Latin American countries. They still struggle to diminish attainment gaps in primary education between indigenous and non- indigenous students (Mosselson et al., 2011).

Indigenous learners tend to have minimal access to education, have to contend with poorer quality education, and do not enjoy the same benefits from education as compared to non-indigenous learners. The marginalised and deprivation of education as described in previous paragraphs among indigenous communities around the world can be reflected among the indigenous communities living in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in Bangladesh which is the focus of this research. Several efforts have been made by the government and NGOs, but the education gap between indigenous and non-indigenous communities in Bangladesh is still very prevalent.

1.1 Indigenous Communities in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT)

Bangladesh houses 11 ethnic indigenous communities who reside in CHT. CHT has a total population of 1,587,000, where about half are indigenous people. CHT is situated in the southeast of Bangladesh bordered by Myanmar, the Indian state of Tripura and Mizoram on the north and east, and the Chittagong district in the west. CHT consists of Bandarban, Khagrachari and Rangamati district (BBS, 2015).

Chakma is the largest ethnic group making up half the ethnic minority population followed by Marma and Tripura in CHT. Other indigenous groups are Bawm, Mro, Tanchangya, Chak, Pangkho, Lushai, and Khumi (Biswas et al., 2016). Indigenous communities are heterogeneous by faith where most are followers of Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and animism, while Bengalis are mostly Muslims (Partha, 2017). The tribal groups speak multiple languages, and are racially related to their neighbouring tribes Burma, Northeast India, and Thailand (Biswas et al., 2016).

CHT's tribal groups form an identity called the Jumma which is derived from the word "jhum" meaning shifting cultivation on hills practiced by indigenous communities (Chowdhury, 2017). Indigenous communities in CHT had a fair share of fights and struggle in establishing their human rights over the years. Parbatya Chattagram Jana Shanhati Samity (PCJSS) was formed in 1972 as a regional political movement for cultural recognition and political autonomy in CHT (Adnan, 2010). During the political legislative process of formulating the Constitution, hill leader M.N. Larma (Manabendra Narayan Larma) demanded points for their rights (Adnan, 2010).

However, in the Constitution of Bangladesh, only one Bengali language (Bangla) and one Bengali nation were enshrined as the basis for the nation. This was unacceptable by indigenous people as they aspired to fully exercise their right to self-determination. The Bangladeshi state's reluctance to provide a degree of political self-rule to CHT, to nurture the region's culture and languages, resulted in a tribal war due to fear of marginalization, and powerlessness among indigenous people (Chowdhury, 2017). Furthermore, the migration of Bengali settlers into CHT further aggravated the conflict as the ethnics were losing their lands and homes. Bengali settlers misappropriated and exploited resources and lands of the indigenous people, substantially crippling their livelihood. Consequently, the Jumma people acceptably regarded that their identity, culture, religion, and economic well-being are being under threat (Bashar, 2013).

Till the signing of the "Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord", the armed PCJSS, led a low intensity guerrilla war against the government in response to violations of the region's autonomy. This intense insurgency ended in 1997 when the government and PCJSS agreed to sign the peace accord. The accord established the withdrawal of all temporary military camps as well as forming the land commission to settle land related problems. These actions were a welcome relief from more than 20 years of hostility and attacks on indigenous people. After the peace accord was established, NGOs started various development projects to accelerate socioeconomic development in CHT.

1.2 NGOs in Chittagong Hill Tracts

The peace accord had laid an onset for various development projects ranging from promotion of education, poverty alleviation, and overall socio-economic development of Jumma people. There has been an expanding acknowledgement of education's role in response to conflict in CHT. Hence, NGOs are evident actors in the socioeconomic transformation in education in CHT.

NGOs have played a pivotal role in contributing to the development of supplementary reading materials in primary schools for indigenous children (Chowdhury et al., 2016). The government has given responsibility to NGOs to revive problematic and non-functioning government community schools to serve its purpose of providing basic education. This initiative aimed to facilitate communities to engage in accelerated, sustainable development in education through the "Strengthening Basic Education Project".

The UNDP programme for the "Promotion of Development and Confidence Building in the CHT – CHTDF" strived for total development of opportunities to be opened equally to all residents in CHT. BRAC found that children of different ethnic communities with the diversity of language, and culture had faced problems in learning in Bangla with teachers from other communities as they had no background of the local language. BRAC started their educational activities for ethnic children and took initiatives to teach the local children in their own mother tongue by running "Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Basic Education (MTB-MLE)" program in order to increase the literacy rate (Sharma & Zeller, 2014). BRAC undertook another two projects for continuing study courses for ethnic minority children with their mother tongues named the "Education for Ethnic Children (EIC)-Oral Based Project" and the "Mother Tongue Based MultiLingual Basic Education" (Ashikuzzaman & Mahmud, 2017). Hence, education is seen as a visible actor in improving the situation of indigenous people in CHT, as it secures greater equality of access necessary for economic, cultural, and social needs.

2. Statement of Problem

Education played an important aspect in the development efforts by NGOs among indigenous communities in CHT. Several initiatives had been deployed in increasing educational attainment. The Constitution of Bangladesh has granted equal rights and opportunities to all citizens regardless of ethnicity, class, sex, caste, and religion. Government and NGOs have launched several multidimensional programmes in accordance with the Primary Education Act ranging from the UNICEF Hard to Reach Urban Child Program, and the Reaching Out of School Children Project (Tietjen, 2003). However, despite such attempts on improving education attainment in CHT, there is a lack of quality research on the results and progress of these initiatives for the education development for indigenous communities.

The literacy rate and the educational attainment in CHT is comparatively lesser than in urban areas. This drives unemployment among indigenous communities, which in return prevents attention to resolving the necessities in the educational sector, causing repercussions in poverty and illiteracy. They still trail behind urban areas, and a significant gap exists in the education attainment (Hossain et al., 2013). According to BANBEIS (2018), the drop out percentage of students by class 6 was 32.47% in Bandarban, 56.99% in Rangamati, and 39.01% in Khagrachari as compared to 7.57% in Chittagong City. Moreover, 1.2% of the 60,100 Tripura populations, 4.2% of the 6900 Bawm populations and 0% of the 22,100 Mro population had completed secondary education in 2013 (Barkat & Halim, 2015).

This consequently leads to the formulation of a question as to why there is a high rate of dropout among indigenous students despite the substantial projects done by NGOs in promoting education. The statement that there are certain challenges faced by NGOs in fostering education among indigenous communities is evoked. However, to answer this statement, there is little research in the field of education among the indigenous communities in CHT which presents the progress and effectiveness of these NGO projects. This thus prompts the need for this research. This statement needs to be answered in order to ensure a win-win scenario for the indigenous communities living there to engage in the benefits of education which contributes to their development.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Indigenous Communities in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT)
Various research has been conducted on different sectors of development in CHT focusing mostly on development projects such as healthcare services where reasons for deterioration of maternal health care in Khagrachari were explored (Pulok et al., 2018). This research highlighted that despite basic maternal health services being free at public health facilities in CHT, indigenous women were reluctant to access services as they perceived medical interventions as inessential, harmful and costly. They have various misconceptions as appropriate health knowledge was not given when they reached out for it.

Furthermore, Dhamai (2016) highlighted that indigenous people face issues of land dispossession through the development and forestry projects. Their lands are taken away without their consent where at times, the government has occupied land from these ethnic communities in the name of building forest reserves and establishing military bases. As the main source of income for the indigenous is agriculture, most of them are left with no land to carry out their jhum cultivation for their daily income.

Discrimination is largely faced by ethnic minorities where they are rarely engaged in the national decisions that concerns them (Mantel & Khan, 2011). In terms of education, Chakma (2017) highlighted that language barrier is prevalent among Chakmas where there is insufficient to mostly no textbooks at all, resulting in high dropouts among them. Hence, this comes as a surprise as reports from UNICEF, have featured NGOs and government providing textbooks in languages for all indigenous communities in CHT which leads to the question if these NGOs face barriers in reaching indigenous communities.

Rizal and Yokota (2014) uncovered that indigenous identities seem to be forgotten within national policy and education decisions in Bangladesh causing most of them to not prioritise education for their children as they find it unworthy. Afreen (2016) further supported that education is deemed a burden on many families as they find educational policies inapplicable to the culture of indigenous children as it fails to reflect on their languages, cultures and livelihoods. Hossain (2017) illustrated Mros to face dearth in accessing education as there is an absence of availability of schools within appropriate walking distance.

Hence, as past researchers dwell in other development issues, the gap of research as to what the progress of the current education state among indigenous communities in CHT exists. In terms of NGOs fostering education, there is minimal research conducted on education. There are mostly NGO documents that show the educational projects implemented which had been described in previous sections. Nevertheless, a few studies will be reviewed to shed light on the overall state of NGOs in Bangladesh.

DeJaeghere and Wiger (2016) conducted a study addressing ways multiple actors such as teachers and School Management Committee (SMC) participating in educational projects illustrate different framings of gender in Bangladesh. The boys and girls are treated differently in educational institutions. This affects the educational attainment among female children causing them to drop out.

From a global point of view, in Pakistan, Rehman and Ismail (2012) had conducted a study which aimed to understand the role NGOs play in teaching primary education in Pakistan. Though NGOs have played a favourable part in influencing projects for development, there were a few shortcomings. There were facilities such as classrooms and drinking water available in educational schools, but these were only limited to certain few NGOs. Thus, the authors concluded discrepancies in NGOs itself that may affect the effectiveness of educational attainment among students.

3.2 Indigenous Communities in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT)
The barriers NGOs face in fostering education among indigenous students in CHT grounds a prime point in this research. Hence, a theoretical perspective is employed to deeply understand the research problem.

Minimal research has been carried out surrounding indigenous communities in CHT. Thus, vast knowledge is to be constructed through observing and sharing interactions, cultures, and practices of NGOs and indigenous communities. The process of unlocking one's own thinking has to be explored. Interpretivist theory is a "people-centred" approach that allows for researchers to incorporate into the research atmosphere which is beneficial as perceptions and understandings of the other can be gathered. It allows researchers to integrate and explore meanings of phenomena from the subjects' perspectives (Morrison, 2013).

Human and social reality can be explained and understood through the paradigms of interpretivist theory that supports a global education perspective (Ledger et al., 2014). This theory assists in explaining on-site occurrences of schooling and curriculum interpretation in

CHT. It can give insights on the social reality of education in CHT. O'Donoghue (2018) notes that interpretivist approach allows for the observation of true meanings behind certain phenomena in their daily livelihood. Hence, through this theory, the researcher intends to analyse on how NGOs favour indigenous communities' involvement and willingness to attain education.

3.3 Research Objective
To understand the hurdles NGOs face when fostering education as the indigenous students' progress to higher levels in CHT.

3.4 Research Question
What hurdles do NGOs face when fostering education as the indigenous students' progress to higher levels in CHT?

3.5 Significance of Study
This journal will be advantageous as it promotes development in CHT, ensuring a stable and peaceful framework of political and social support that will be responsive to basic necessities of indigenous people. Little is known about the barriers NGOs face in fostering education among indigenous people making this qualitative research timely and relevant. Hence the research gap on challenges NGOs face that results in indigenous children to lag in education as compared to those in urban regions in Bangladesh will be explored.

4. Method

4.1 Research Design
Qualitative method had been used in this research. Creswell and Poth (2016) refer to qualitative research as *"a form of social enquiry that focuses on ways people interpret and make sense of their experiences."* It is observed that indigenous communities living in CHT have not led a peaceful life. Thus, their experiences with NGOs for education adds value to the research. As qualitative research allows the understanding of human experiences, behaviours and perspectives, it creates a platform for the researcher to engage with NGOs and understand the actual scenario faced by them. Phenomenology approach was employed as it allows the gathering of 'deep' information and perceptions through inductive methods from the perspective of key participants (Patton, 2002).

This research used in-depth interviews which access first-hand information and flexible answers as it tries to answer the question of how, what, why and where in research questions. Legard and Keegan (2003) had described in-depth interviews as a powerful tool for understanding human beings and exploring topics in depth.

Thematic analysis was used as the analytical approach to seeking answers as it is a flexible data analysis plan used to generate themes from interview data. It provides a rich description of overall data which is useful to answer the main research question. Data analysis is important as Marshall and Rossman (2014) described it as the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to mass collected data. The analysis hastens a thorough understanding through the experiences and opinions shared by NGOs in interviews. Hence, the revelation and communication of key informants were recorded and analysed to validate the research.

4.2 Key Informants

Purposive sampling had been used for selecting informants. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to rely on his or her own judgment when choosing members of the population to participate in a study (Godambe, 1982). The developed research question served as a guideline in choosing informants for the interviews. The informants were identified to be NGO officers that are solely working on education projects in CHT. The rationale behind this is to get a clearer view and in-depth understanding on what barriers NGOs face in fostering education in CHT. NGO officers were selected based on their work experience in educational projects in CHT where each had a minimum of five years' experience. They have primarily worked in NGOs for a long span of time and have been assigned to multiple field projects from pre- primary to primary and secondary level education for different ethnic groups. The employees preferred having the interviews in their respective offices where the interviews lasted from 60 to 90 minutes.

Table 1: Demographics of the Participants

Code	Name of NGO	Position of Officer in NGO	Educational Projects in CHT	No of years of experience
KI1	UNDP	District Manager	Strengthening Inclusive Developmentin CHT (SID-CHT)	15
KI2	BRAC	Learning Division Officer	Education for Ethnic Children (EIC) Program.	9
KI3	Caritas	Program Officer	Integrated Community Development Project with UNICEF	5
KI4	Caritas	Secretary to the Regional Office	Education Project for Ethnic Children (EPEC)	8
KI5	ASA	Divisional Manager	Primary Education Strengthening Project	5
KI6	ASA	District Manager	Primary Education Strengthening Project	17

4.3 Results

By obtaining extensive qualitative information from key informants and secondary sources, the purpose of this research can be fulfilled. The findings reported the following themes that were generated from the direct responses of the key informants. The themes were generated directly from key informants and were done verbatim. The informants have different interpretations, views which were analysed and categorized based on their reflections on each theme.

Table 2: Findings from the Study

No	Themes Generated
1	Geographical Barriers
2	Post Accord Violence
3	Language Conflicts
4	Psychology of Indigenous Population

5. Discussions

5.1 Geographical Barriers

Geographical barriers are a challenge that NGOs face. Efforts are executed tremendously without fail by NGOs as they try their level best to execute projects in these hard to access areas. KI6 had stated that, *"CHT has three districts which are divided into sub-districts where the distance from one to another is very far and difficult. It is hard for us to travel to some places as there are no proper roads and transportation."*

The researcher further explored if these issues had been properly addressed to the right authorities to which KI3 mentioned, *"Several complaints have been issued by NGOs and the locals. The government has been working on providing better roads and transportation systems, but the efforts and progress are very slow".* KI1 also mentioned that there are several vacancies and a chronic shortage of human resources in these hard-to-reach areas. "*The locals have to travel on foot for hours to go from one village to another just to access basic resources and attend schools. It becomes extremely unsafe to travel after dark, as there is no electricity in these hilly terrains and deep forests. It is difficult to walk or drive here.*"

Thus, inaccessibility to education remains high due to geographical challenges. Due to the very steep, rugged and mountainous terrain, it is dangerous for students to attend schools as they often must travel long distances to attend school. It is difficult to build roads in the dusty and undulating terrain that is often susceptible to landslides during monsoon seasons. The area's remoteness and poor communication have made it difficult to provide basic social services to inhabitants of CHT. The findings are reflected in the views of Hossain (2017), where lack of transportation and high transport costs hinders the students from achieving education despite NGOs building up schools in these places. The seasonal inaccessibility to these hard-to-reach areas as well as weak communications systems halts education attainment among indigenous students.

These indigenous people live in relatively remote areas where they lack basic infrastructure and facilities for outsiders to come stay. In some cases, the nearest facilities can take hours or even days to reach. Not only that, in some remote areas, it's necessary for villagers to travel by boat to get their children to school. Some live on terrains that are receptive to landslides making it dangerously slippery. The rivers get wild during monsoon season leaving them deprived from basic facilities such as drinking water let alone education.

Furthermore, the indigenous populations live in small, scattered habitats, locally known as 'Paras', which are difficult to access because of the hilly remote terrain. Some 'Paras' still do not have proper electricity, let alone schools. Each of these indigenous groups are completely isolated and are located far from each other (Bashar, 2013). The findings found that the students are forced to walk long distances for hours just to go to school in another 'Para' which slowly causes disinterest in attaining education due to the hassle leading to dropouts. This is supported by Kim and Hull (2012) where geographical hardship often leads to disinterest among students to pursue education in developing countries.

Thus, minimal infrastructure facilities due to geographical barriers hinders educational progress among indigenous students. The Asian Indigenous Peoples Pact (2007) reflected the findings where despite the considerable improvement in the spread of education, the level of educational attainment is still very low amongst indigenous communities in CHT as they are geographically challenged leaving them deprived from progressing in education. Additionally, Brown (2011) viewed that inconsistent transportation and communication in inaccessible rural areas due to geographical constraints causes a pervasive difference in dropouts among students in urban and rural areas. Hence, geographical constraints need to be overcome by NGOs to cultivate education

among the students in CHT. Proper roads need to be built in order to increase accessibility of these rural populations to their basic resources.

5.2 Post Accord Violence
Violence in CHT is very common. For the past two decades, regions of CHT have been strictly militarized where access to outsiders is tightly controlled and indigenous people are forbidden to speak to foreigners without any supervision. Despite the peace accord, major components of the peace accord remain largely unimplemented. Armed conflicts still exist causing violence and questionable safety. This provokes poverty and stuns development in general, particularly educational development.

Serious human rights violations have resulted due to the army's ongoing presence. The violence between indigenous communities and Bengali settlers left thousands of ethnic minorities homeless as their houses were burnt down. The indigenous people are assaulted, and their properties looted. There are plenty of kidnapping cases that take place here. KI5 added, *"...even we men travel in groups when we go to deeper regions of Rangamati as safety in numbers. It is completely unsafe for girls to travel there at all."*

The safety issue becomes a hurdle for NGOs. Sexual violence is very common and is routinely carried out by Bengali settlers and military. These girls face discrimination of human rights and face continual injustice. Unfortunately, it is very typical for indigenous women to be treated this way throughout South Asia. For instance, there are over millions of indigenous people who are treated as being below the caste system in India. There is somehow a sense of superiority and entitlement over indigenous women throughout South Asia (Ravi et al., 2017). The hidden nature of CHT and the total impunity of the criminals makes it a more complex problem. Due to fear of safety, many indigenous parents do not send their children to schools.

KI4 observed that these violence and conflicts affect the innocent indigenous people as most are now left with no land to farm and grow crops. Life has become hard for the girls as they are already very poor, and the constant fear cultivated from the close proximity of the army and settlers discourages them from leaving the house let alone pursue education. Hence, violence conflict over political rights and natural resources weakens the indigenous people in multiple ways since the conflict is largely concentrated in indigenous inhabited areas making them direct victims of the intra-communal violence. As D'Costa (2016) states, the indigenous minorities live in continued fear of attacks in their own homeland. Besides Bengali settlers and military, indigenous communities also face terrorist attacks. There are terrorist attacks from Burmese terrorists called Rakkhains who loot villages, and kidnap villagers particularly girls who live close to the Burmese Border. A great influx of communities' face security challenges near the Myanmar border of CHT (Kundu, 2017).

With these frequent occurrences of violence, education efforts of NGOs remain stagnant. NGOs and government schools get burnt down by Bengali settlers as effects of the violence. Indigenous students are unable to access schools for years and eventually drop out. The indigenous girls sometimes get harassed and ambushed on their way to school or home, growing fear of attending school and eventually stopping from going to schools. This is reflected in Barkat and Halim (2015) views where the school dropout rate in CHT is very high at 65%, particularly among indigenous girls.

The enrolment rate in CHT ends up significantly lower than that of the national average. The parents' concerns for personal safety of their vulnerable children, particularly girls, hinder them from sending their kids to schools (Hossain, 2017). The conflicts and violence leave the indigenous communities and NGOs, helpless in achieving educational attainment. Although the

peace-accord was signed to eradicate the conflict, indigenous communities still experience severe trauma and are living in extremely difficult conditions which ultimately drives them to neglect education completely as their sole purpose becomes survival (Rizal & Yokota, 2014). NGOs are unable to implement education projects and encourage indigenous students resulting in a slow development in education. Kinsey (2006) views considerable negative long-term outcomes in educational attainment among indigenous populations who are continually exposed to violence.

5.3 Language Conflicts

Language is the backbone of a society and plays a pivotal responsibility in building a community and country. Language creates unity among speakers of a particular language (Schmidt, 2013). Besides food, clothes and religion, language is one of the most common methods to distinguish a person as it is inherited from their parents.

Bangladesh is a country in which 98% of the people speak the national language Bangla as a first language and identify themselves as Bangladeshis. On the contrary, CHT consists of diverse indigenous communities with different languages resulting in a large gap between the homogenous nature of the majority Bengali community and the various ethno- linguistic indigenous minorities (Cavallaro & Rahman, 2009).

This difference in language poses a challenge as KI2 mentioned "*...each ethnic has their own language which completely differs from one another. For example, Chakmas would not understand the language spoken by Tripuras or the Mro language would not be understood by Marmas. The way they present their letters in writing are very different from one another.*" Hence it is difficult for NGOs to engage with indigenous communities as most of them do not understand Bangla which is the mother tongue of majority Bangladeshis. Most of them are only capable of speaking their own language and cannot comprehend a single ounce of Bangla.

KI4 expressed regrets, "*With the multiplicity of languages, the effects of illiteracy are high as these communities are already spread out where Tripuras are mostly concentrated in Bandarban whereas Lushais are mostly concentrated in Rangamati. Once reaching, another challenge of language barrier arises.*" The government has published books through the MLE program where books were introduced in both community language as well as Bangla which has assisted and increased the literacy rate in several places. More people in the local community can converse and study in Bangla. However, other communities such as Tanchangya and Lushai still do not have books. Thus, more MLE books consisting of other community languages need to be introduced in order for the students to study and cope with the education curriculum. Chatterjee (2010) views that due to language barrier, dropout rate among indigenous students is almost 60-70%, which is considerably higher than the average non-indigenous students.

As the education curriculum is Bangla oriented, most indigenous students learning in Bangla face problems understanding the context. These indigenous students have a growing anxiety to attend schools and classes as they do not find the environment comfortable. This slowly prompts disinterest, and they eventually drop out as they are not able to grasp the context well enough. This is reflected in Chakma (2019) where dropout rate among indigenous students is high as they are unable to cope-up with the language and cultural barrier with their mates and surroundings.

Finding a capable teacher who is well-versed in Bangla in a particular ethnic community is extremely difficult for NGOs as most of these indigenous people only understand and converse in their own language. Therefore, in some cases, the need to bring a Chakma teacher who is from a different ethnic and language background to teach Bangla to a Mro community is required at times. The need for teacher student engagement is pivotal according to Davis (2015) as a

connected relationship between the two facilitates learning which builds student's self-confidence and increases their motivation to learn, which unfortunately does not take place in CHT. Hence, language gap between Bangladeshis and indigenous communities consequently affects them as they either eventually lose their identity in the pursuit of learning Bangla or lose the language touch of their own roots.

5.4 Psychology of Indigenous Population

Parents play a vital role in their children's education. Educational experts recommend encouraging parents to become more aware of their children's academics. Bergman (2016) states that greater involvement of parents in their children's academy proves to be helpful for their education. However, the educational reality in developing countries is fundamentally different and CHT is not any different. The findings uncovered that most indigenous parents are often unable to follow their children's education as they themselves are illiterate. Most of them are unaware of the importance of education despite NGOs putting in deep efforts. Kainuwa (2014) viewed that parental education is a consistent issue in determining a child's education.

KI3 acknowledged disinterest towards education has been brought down from generations after generations in their family. This reflects Noriati, et al. (2011) views, where general characteristics among indigenous communities contribute to the lack of interest in education. The indigenous people are very humble, shy, passive and do not enjoy being forced to do something. Moreover, they are found to easily get bored and lose attention in learning. Sigei (2014) reflects that indigenous people were observed to be resilient and rather be engaged physically and also have short memory.

The economic status of indigenous parents also becomes an issue. As the majority of indigenous communities live below the poverty line, the expense of education becomes a reason as to why demand for education might be low. As Glewwe and Muralidharan (2016) observes, due to financial constraints, indigenous students drop out of school to fulfil their financial needs, influencing the dropout rate to increase. Due to high costs of education, most parents prefer their children work to supplement household income and participate in "Jhum" farming.

The parents also prefer sending their sons over their daughters as they perceive that daughters do not require full education and should be taught handling household chores. Due to historic patriarchy, dependence on sons had become embedded among a few indigenous communities. The boys are perceived to provide for family and thus expected to study and work while the girls remain at home doing housework. This is reflected in Roy (2018) where dependence on men by indigenous women has strongly been reinforced.

Furthermore, KI6 stated that most parents do not assess the return of investment in their children's education accurately. They do not perceive education as being important to increase income and have better lives. To them, whatever income is generated from their daily farm cultivation and small exchange of goods for meals will be enough to get through for the rest of their lives. They believe that urban job markets are too competitive, and they will not stand a chance in the job market.

Moreover, despite schools being free for all, there are still additional expenses of tuition, books, school supplies, and transportation. KI1 added that, "as Jhum farming is their only source of income, indigenous communities are extremely poor which really affects their socioeconomic factors." As the education quality in CHT is low, parents are forced to sometimes send their kids

to tuition centres which they cannot afford. Though some parents are illiterates, they still encourage their students to attend schools but when their child faces difficulties in their studies, they are unable to educate and guide their children. This is reflected in Avvisati et al. (2014), that students from less educated parents systematically perform worse in school rather than students whose parents have education.

Thus, if encouraged right, parents can change their decisions in a sophisticated manner for the betterment of their children (Andrabi et al., 2015). Literacy classes for mothers should be promoted to instil interest in education. Shotland (2018) found that literate mothers can help improve children's education resulting in better academic performance. Parental involvement in schools may improve accountability and transparency, resulting in improvement of educational performance and reducing dropouts.

6. Conclusion

Having conducted a comprehensive analysis through academic research and in-depth interviews, it was found that there are certain hurdles NGOs face in fostering education among indigenous communities in CHT. The dangerous steep and mountainous terrain results in inaccessibility to education. The indigenous students have to travel long tireless journeys just to attend schools which are far from their homes. These constraints make it difficult to provide basic social services to inhabitants of CHT for NGOs.

Moreover, due to violence, indigenous communities and NGOs face security challenges. The armed conflict often results in minorities being left homeless as their houses get burnt down. Hence, safety is a major concern among the parents thus prohibiting them from sending their children to schools. Furthermore, imposing Bangla as the national language in CHT emerged as a hurdle for the NGOs. Indigenous students face it as a challenge as they have to master their own language as well Bangla which proves rather hard for them. In schools, Bangla is used as the medium of conversation proving a hurdle as many students are not proficient in Bangla itself. Indigenous students lose interest in pursuing education as they are unable to relate to the content.

Lastly, the psychology of the indigenous is a hurdle. Most indigenous parents are illiterate and unaware of the importance of education to increase income and lead better lives. As most are poor, the expense of education becomes a factor that influences their ideology on the disinterest in education attainment. These poor families have to first meet their essential needs of food and shelter leaving education to no importance. Parental expectations are often low because of the lack of perceived economic return on educational investments.

Hence, these challenges hamper the efforts of NGOs in fostering education among indigenous students. In order to maintain these efforts, NGOs need to first overcome these challenges to reach indigenous students. A few recommendations that can be addressed is that NGOs need to brainstorm innovative ideas of implementing informal education during times indigenous children accompany their parents for Jhum cultivation to avoid them missing out on classes and falling back. Indigenous parents also need to realize the importance of learning Bangla as motivation starts from home. By involving indigenous mothers in programmes that generate money, they can start realizing the importance of education for generating income which can bring a sense of empowerment, bringing about change in the parents' mindset.

A few brief recommendations can be made for future research where the inclusion of current curriculum reviews of the Bangladeshi educational system can be covered. Since this research focused on indigenous communities living in CHT, another recommended research could be on ethnic tribes residing in other regions besides CHT in Bangladesh as it is not covered in this research.

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