


Women Empowerment through Integrated Development Approach: A Case Study on Poverty Eradication Program (PEP)

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INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Submitted: 14-08-2024, Revised: 23-09-2024, Accepted: 10-10-2024 Available Online: 22-10-2024</p> <p>Copyright ©2024 by Journal of Judikultura (s) This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.</p>  <p>Keywords: Women Empowerment, Integrated Development, Poverty Eradication, Rural Bangladesh, Socio-Economic Upliftment</p>	<p><i>This study investigates the impact of the Poverty Eradication Program (PEP) on women's empowerment in rural Bangladesh through an integrated development approach. The research aims to assess how PEP's combination of economic, social, and environmental initiatives contributes to the socio-economic empowerment of women. A combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods was used to gather data from women who have benefited from various PEP programs, such as microcredit, sericulture, and healthcare. Thus, the study findings indicate that PEP's activities have positively shifted the lives of women and girls by enhancing their financial status, social status, and access to essential services, including education and health services. However, there are still several challenges, such as society's resistance to accept fully empowered employees and limited market access. Finally, the study found that the integrated model implemented by PEP has been helpful in employing women as well as poverty eradication, but constant support and improvement of the strategies are necessary in stripping barriers that persistently hinder such achievements.</i></p>

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Women's empowerment has emerged as a critical focus in global development discourses, emphasizing the need to enhance women's roles in economic, social, and political spheres (Gul et al., 2022). In Bangladesh, empowering women is not only a gender issue but also an essential initiative for poverty alleviation and sustainable development (Zafarullah & Nawaz, 2019). It has witnessed a number of measures being taken for women's rights, with a particular focus on rural women, as most of them are poor and vulnerable (Rahman, 1994). In fact, this is close to the following PEP, which is an integrated development program that aims to empower women by providing them with the necessary tools to improve their socioeconomic status (Attamah et al., 2020).

In general, women's empowerment refers to the enhancement of women's spiritual, political, social, educational, gender, and economic power (Rajeshwari & Shettar, 2015). The only way women can rise above their poor status in society, as seen in most cultures and religions, is through empowerment. Additionally, it plays a vital role in preventing different forms of violence and discrimination against vulnerable groups (Shah, 2021). In Bangladesh, women represent 47% of the total population, and if sustainable development is to be achieved, women must be included (Haque, 2019; Kabir and Rabby, 2023). Previously known as the Institute of Integrated Rural Development (IIRD), PEP was created with the mission of developing a model of integrated rural development that can be scaled up throughout Bangladesh (PEP, 2023).

Research Problem

Bangladesh has made a lot of progress in women's rights, but the rural area is still face huge problem. The level of poverty and gender inequality is also high in rural areas. Due to this, the integrated development approach of PEP has made it possible to make some progress in the situation. However, this approach has not been well researched in its ability to transform the status of women and eradicate poverty in the long run. The purpose of this research is to assess the role of the integrated development model of PEP on women's empowerment in rural Bangladesh. For instance, this research seeks to find out how micro credit, sericulture and healthcare services PEP programs help enhance the status of women in these areas.

Research Objectives

The broad objective of this study is to explore how the Poverty Eradication Program impact on the women's empowerment through its integrated development approach. The study has the following specific objectives:

- To find the impact of the PEP's economic empowerment activities, such as micro-credit and small donation on female beneficiaries' financial capabilities.
- To exploring the role of social and environmental activities carried out within the program, such as healthcare services and reforestation programs, in increasing women's social status and improving the quality of their lives.
- To investigating the difficulties faced by women at the time of their engagement with the different integrated program and the ways in which PEP addresses their concerns.

Significance of the Study

This study would contribute to the existing body of knowledge regarding empowerment and poverty alleviation strategies specifically aimed at women in Bangladesh. This research unravels how an integrated development approach of PEP works for women when both economic, social, and environmental interventions are combined (Kar et al., 2013). The results of this study may be helpful to policy-makers, development practitioners, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for devising interventions that are complete and interrelated with each other and ensure sustainability so that women's empowerment may lead toward their transformative potential. In doing so, the study documents what has been achieved and what needs further work in the PEP approach, providing insights that can be relevant to similar initiatives elsewhere.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to the Empowerment of Women

Women's empowerment is a process that involves enhancing women's economic, social, political, and cultural status, especially those who have been disadvantaged traditionally (Sen et al., 2023). The concept of empowerment is closely linked with people's ability and communities' capacity to take control over their lives, make informed decisions, and act upon them in order to achieve desired outcomes (Rajeshwari & Shettar, 2015). According to this viewpoint, women's empowerment means raising the position of females in all spheres of life, such as spiritual, political, and economic domains, among others. It should be noted that not only does it promote their well-being, but it also contributes towards overall development within communities (Ayisha & Latip, 2023).

Women's Empowerment in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has nearly half its population being women; hence, their involvement is necessary for sustainable development. The government of Bangladesh recognizes this fact and, therefore, has put in place various policies and programs aimed at promoting gender equality (Wei et al., 2021). In line with the Sixth Five Year Plan (2011-2015), which emphasized political and economic

participation as critical drivers for national transformation towards middle-income status by 2021 (Global Gender Gap Report, 2012, Rabby and Rahamn. 2023), the country also commits itself to the achievement of MDGs as well as CEDAW.

The success achieved by Bangladesh in terms of enhancing gender equity can be seen through increased female enrolment rates at all levels, including higher education institutions; representation within decision-making bodies, both elected or appointed offices; involvement in wage employment, particularly non-agricultural sectors, etcetera (World Economic Forum). However, there are still some challenges, especially in rural areas where cultural norms coupled with poverty tend to limit the full participation of womenfolk into various spheres of life (Rural Women - Facts & Figures: Rural Women and the Millennium Development Goals, 2012).

Integrated Development Approach

Poverty Eradication Program (PEP) adopts an integrated development approach towards empowering women in Bangladesh. This model simultaneously takes into account different dimensions of poverty so as to ensure sustainable development (Chowdhury, 2015). Unlike other programs that are driven by specific activities, the people-centeredness of this integrated development model recognizes uniqueness in terms of the needs of each household (PEP Annual Report, 2017). Therefore, through offering economic opportunities, education support services, and healthcare facilities, among others, PEP enables women and their families to attain financial independence while improving quality life standards (Changhong & Huangang, 2020).

Economic empowerment is one crucial component to support the integrated approach used by PE (Ahmed et al., 2010). In order to achieve self-reliance economically, various income-generating ventures such as sericulture, garment making, or even livestock rearing are provided for women by PEP. These not only raise women's economic status but also enhance their social standing within the communities they live in (Christianna et al., 2020).

Economic Empowerment through PEP

The main aim behind economic empowerment initiatives implemented by PEP is to ensure that women have sustainable sources of income (Gautam, 2020). To achieve this objective, there is a need for training in different trades like silk processing, garment making, and leather work, which can enable them to produce marketable goods and thus earn regular incomes (PEP Annual Report, 2017). For instance, the Nari Garments project employs hundreds of rural females, equipping them with the necessary skills plus tools required in producing high-quality garments together with other textile materials (Lone, 2020).

Apart from making clothes, PEP supports women through its providing small grants for establishing IGAs, establishing profitable small rural industries, engaging in women's development and job training, engaging in sericulture, tissue culture, horticulture, agriculture and irrigation programs, developing fishery cooperatives, livestock and poultry enterprises, providing microfinance and savings activities (Olayiwola & Adeleye, 2005; Lange, 1980; BRAHMA et al., 2020). PEP also provides micro-credit programs that give small loans to needy women to start or expand their own businesses. These credits range from 800 to 5,000 taka and are used for buying livestock, setting up small enterprises, or investing in agriculture, among other things (PEP Annual Report, 2017).

Social Empowerment and Healthcare Initiatives

PEP's social empowering initiatives include promoting women education, health and social welfare. The organization operates Child Development Centers (CDCs), which offer non-formal basic education to children in low income families with the special focus on girl child enrollment (Chowdhary et al., 2018; Burudi & Poipoi, 2012). These centers not only ensure that illiteracy level is brought down but also ensure that women are employed in the teaching profession (PEP Annual Report, 2017). Education is one of the methods that empower females because it eradicates

poverty and also works for the rights of women in the rural areas (Ihuoma, 2022; Malik, 2013; Nayak & Mahanta, 2015; Naz, 2003).

Healthcare is another important component of integrated development model implemented by PEP. It runs several health care centers such as Hajigonj Bazar Rural Hospital where women and children of the poor are treated at a cheap price in the rural areas (Riaz et al., 2018). Further, through partnerships with other global actors such as Vitamin Angels, PEP is able to give micronutrient supplements to pregnant and nursing mothers enhancing the health standard of mothers and their children (PEP Annual Report, 2017).

Overview of The Poverty Eradication Program (PEP)

The Poverty Eradication Program (PEP), earlier known as the Institute of Integrated Rural Development (IIRD), was founded by Mr. William Christensen with a view to providing an example of integrated rural development model in Bangladesh. Established in 1986 in Dhunot Upazila of Bogra District, PEP has expanded its operations to nine more upazilas making it one of the leading agencies working for rural development and women's uplift in Bangladesh. The organization operates on the integrated development approach whereby it strives to bring changes to the socio-economic status of the ultra-poor individuals particularly women through developmental processes.

Vision and Mission

PEP's vision is of a strong and united village society with respect for all members, especially women and children, promotion of social awareness and which offers a standard of life for all which allows them to meet their basic needs.

PEP's mission is to create a model of rural development that can be replicated in any area of the country – one that will facilitate the creation of a strong and united village society with respect for all and that offers a standard of life which allows all people to meet their basic needs, with preference to the needs of children and women.

Organizational Objectives

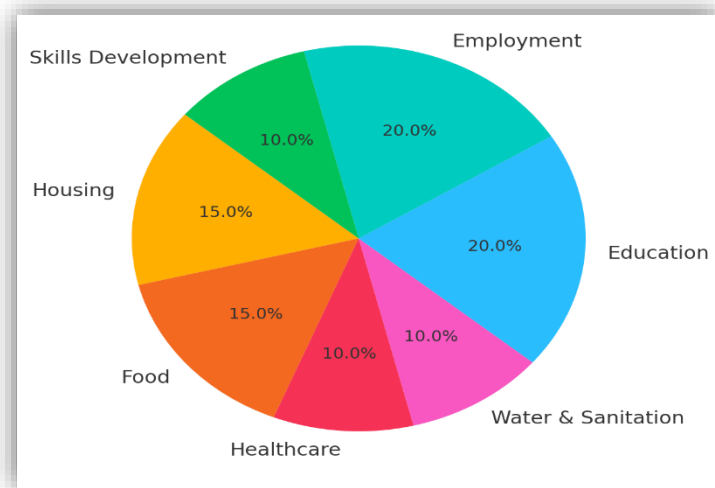
The organizational objectives of PEP program is reducing poverty by at least 50% in each upazila where PEP works, fostering a comprehensive and integrated development process whereby the main development works undertaken in any upazila can be completed within 15 years, helping create a more balanced, diversified and vibrant economy with specific emphasis on neglected sectors such as cottage industries, reforestation, fisheries, livestock, poultry, and sericulture, promoting innovative agricultural activities such as short-duration pariza rice cultivation, flood-resistant and drought-tolerant rice varieties, liming of acidic soils and integrated rice-fish cultivation and promoting innovative Micro-credit program such as agricultural activities, fisheries, livestock, poultry and consumer products emphasis on economic self-sufficiency, women's development, and leadership among the rural poor.

Approaches and Integrated Development Model

Poverty Eradication Program (PEP) adopts an integrated, people-focused approach that gives special attention to the conditions of low-income families This model emphasizes a holistic approach to addressing poverty, focusing on housing, healthcare, education, employment, and essential skills development. This model placed on the fact that each family is different, and therefore, customization of assistance is necessary (Kabeer, 2005).

Components of the Integrated Development Model: The PEP's model has several essential elements, among them the provision of affordable housing, measures of nutritional security, basic health care, safe and sufficient water, latrine facilities, primary education for school-age children, and jobs creation (UNDP, 2016). Securing the gainful employment of women and increasing their participation in the decision-making processes reinforces women's economic power in the community, which further supports their economic security.

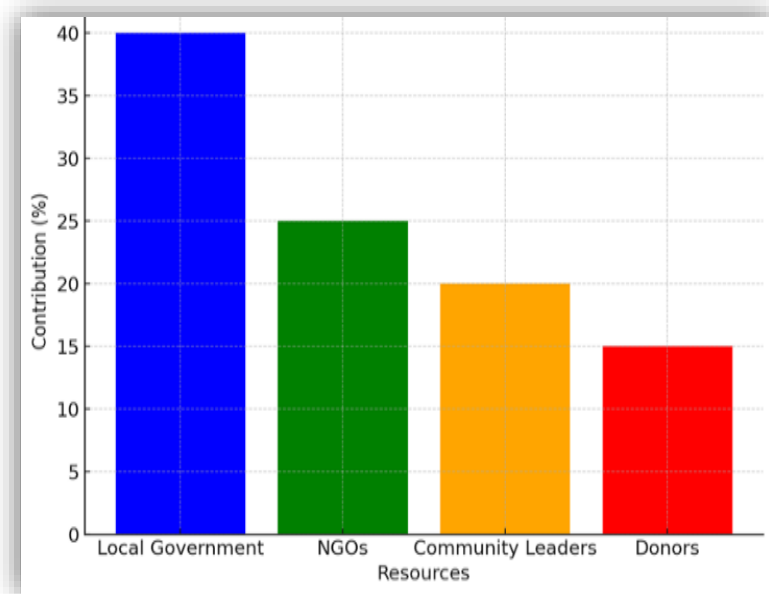
Figure 1: Components of Integrated development model



As shown in Figure 1, the integrated model allocates a sizeable portion to both education (20%) and employment opportunities (20%), stressing the importance of human capital in poverty alleviation efforts.

Resource Mobilization: PEP has demonstrated a great degree of success due to its ability to raise a wide range of resources. For this, it utilizes the support of local governments, NGOs, community leaders, and international funding agencies. Local governments are the key stakeholders, as they provide 40% of the resources for sustaining the program, and NGOs and community leaders contribute 25% and 20%, respectively (World Bank, 2018). Donor contributions through their institutions remain critical in filling gaps, especially health and education gaps.

Figure 2: Resource Mobilization for PEP



The second chart presents the resource mobilization breakdown by providing the total dollar value of all the resources mobilized, indicating the determination required to eliminate poverty in its absolute form.

Outcome of Community-Based Development for Women Empowerment: Community-based development is the most crucial emphasis within the PEP. In this model, women are not mere beneficiaries of development efforts but are engaged in the process (Moser, 2005). Women's involvement in education, employment, and health care has contributed to improvements in living standards and socio-economic stability.

The organization covers nine upazilas in four districts of Bangladesh, namely Bogra district, which has three upazilas under its coverage area, namely Dhunot Upazila, where PEP was established initially followed by Shibganj Upazila then Sherpur Sadar Upazila; Netrokona district with two upazilas covered being Kalmakanda Upazila alongside Mohanganj Upazila; Chandpur district having two upazilas targeted which are Matlab Dakshin Upazila together with Haimchar Upazila while Kishoregonj district also has two upazilas under consideration i.e., Karimganj Upazila followed by Bajitpur Upazila respectively. PEP workers visit beneficiaries' homes to assist, thus ensuring that people do not have to come to PEP offices for help. Another chart is showing the number of beneficiaries from different districts and upazila of Bangladesh, where around 32700 peoples from all over the Bangladesh participated and benefited from the program.

METHODS

This study adopted a cross-sectional research design that incorporates both quantitative and qualitative methods to assess the effects of the Poverty Eradication Program (PEP) on women in rural Bangladesh (Islam et al., 1970). The researcher felt this was the most suitable approach since it gives a holistic perspective of the area of interest by obtaining both statistical facts and more intimate or personal accounts of the research subjects (Siddique, 1998).

Target Population and Sampling: The specific target population in this study was women beneficiaries of the PEP program in the rural regions of Bangladesh (Schuler & Hashemi, 1995). A total of 30 women participated in the research, aged from 20 to 50 years, with a mean of 35 years. The size of the sample was based on the amount of funds available and the need to make sure enough details were provided in the analysis (Sk et al., 2008). The women had to have participated in the PEP program for a minimum period of two years and expressed willingness to contribute to the study. The study sought to engage women of different ages and experiences, so the participants were selected based on purposive sampling (Velott et al., 2008). The participants were enrolled through local branches of the PEP program, whereby they were provided information about their experiences and offered an opportunity to participate (Steinman et al., 2012). All participants were granted their consent before the commencement of the research (Suherman et al., 2020).

Data Collection: This research employed a mixed method approach, so both qualitative and quantitative data were collected (Firouzkouhi et al., 2022). The data was collected through a survey questionnaire that was administered to all 30 participants. The survey questionnaire covered areas such as demographic characteristics, economic empowerment, social empowerment, and satisfaction with the PEP program (Naway & Saliko, 2020). Qualitative data was collected through interviews held with 10 participants who expressed readiness to share their experiences and opinions on the issues of the study (Naway & Saliko, 2020). The interviews were carried out in the Bengali language for a period of about one to one and a half hour. The contents of the interviews were recorded and written down in full detail (Pooja et al., 2022).

Ethical Approval and Data Confidentiality: Ethical matters regarding participation in the study were reviewed and approved by the Ethical Review Board of PEP authorities (Firouzkouhi et al., 2022). Participants signed an informed consent document prior to data collection and were promised that their data would be treated with utmost privacy and confidentiality. The collected data was kept in a safe place, and the only person who had access to it was the researcher (Stopczynski et al., 2014). The participants were also made aware of their option to withdraw from the research at any time they felt uncomfortable (Szyjewski, 2019).

Data Analysis: The data was collected first using mixed methods: qualitative and quantitative methods (McElfish et al., 2018). Quantitative data was analyzed using various types of descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis (Lewis, 2019). The outcomes of the said research are included in the next section.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

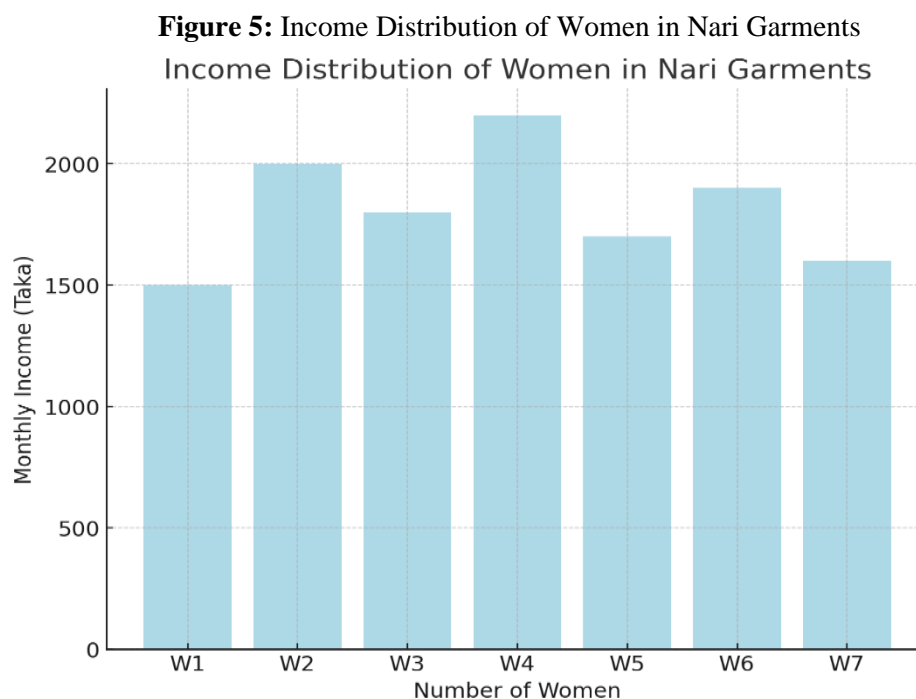
This chapter presents results and discussions of the research questions that have been developed out of the literature review and research method in the previous chapters. The purpose is to know how far PEP has gone to support empowered women living in rural area in Bangladesh. This research employed both primary and secondary data that was collected through questionnaires, face-to-face interviews, online surveys, on-site observations amongst other methods from various project that PEP has implemented. These outcomes are then examined in light of the enhancement of women's socioeconomic standing in relation to the process of community development.

Impact of PEP's Programs on Women's Economic Empowerment

The Poverty Eradication Program (PEP) has not just played a basic irregular role but also played a significant and crucial role in creating economic opportunities for poor rural Bangladeshi women. Several ventures implemented under this initiative, such as Nari Garments, Livestock Program, and Micro-Credit Program, have contributed significantly to enhancing financial security among females (Islam et al., 1970; Uddin, 2015).

Nari Garments

Nari Garments alone has provided jobs for thousands of highly impoverished females working in cottage industries located within their communities, such as garment making, embroidery, leather works, etc (Thangaraj et al., 2016; Ahmed, 2009). According to records obtained so far, more than ninety-four (94) women are currently involved with production activities at small-scale enterprises supported by PEPs, where they receive training plus other necessary inputs needed for income generation purposes. For example, Amena Begum, aged 33 years, has been employed by Nari Garments since, nine years ago, earning between 1500-2000 taka monthly, which she uses essentially to support her family, thus raising their living standards significantly.



This graph shows the distribution of income among women working in Nari Garments, with a discussion on how this income has affected their economic independence.

The study tries to know about numerous women who are leading a better life by involving themselves with 'Nari garments', a project of this organization. There are some interviewees who shared their experience about Nari Garments that-

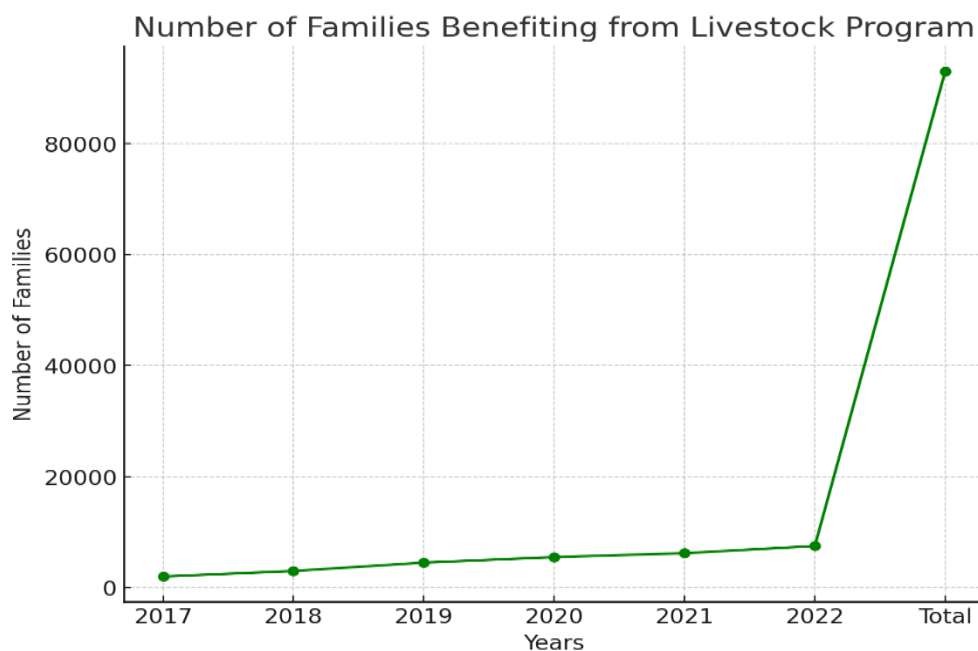
"I have been working in bangla nari garments for nine years in sewing section. During the starting period, I got a free training of 6 months by a project of Netrokona Integrated Development

Program (NIDP). During the training, I got 24 taka per day and now she is earning 1500 to 2000 per month by doing production work regularly. I also got a sewing machine by government and she can earn at least 1500 taka by working at home. I have only a 10-decimal house. By getting training and sewing machine, now I can contribute an extra amount to my family and I am leading better life now.” Another interviewee also mentioned “I have been working in bangla nari garments for seven years in leather section. During the starting period, I got a free training of 3 months by a project of Netrokona Integrated Development Program (NIDP). During the training, I got 24 takas per day and now I am earning 2000 to 2500 per month by doing production work regularly. By working in the leather section of the garments, I am raising my child in a better way and can educate in a good school.”

Livestock Program

The PEP’s Livestock Program has also greatly affected women’s economic empowerment (Karnaji et al., 2021). It gives them animals like hens, goats and cows to keep and sell for money. Since it started, more than 93,000 families have benefited from this scheme. For instance, Zohora Begum who is 54 years old was given one calf by the program; she now has two cows and two calves of her own. The income they get from selling milk has helped improve their financial status as a family.

Figure 6: Number of Families Benefiting from Livestock Program



A bar chart of the number of families reached annually through the Livestock Program, illustrating steady program expansion and its impact on women's economic empowerment.

During the visit to Bogra for collecting data, we met a family who are the beneficiaries of PEP livestock program and we took interview of them. One of the women mentioned that -

“They don’t have their own house and not even a piece of land. PEP gave her a piece of land to live 5 years ago. She used to spend the day in scarcity with the little money of his youngest son as her husband is unable to work and her elder son had a terrible accident. Dhunut integrated development program, a project of PEP gave a calf 3 year ago and now she has 2 cows and 2 calves. She told me that she can help her family with the money she gets by selling milk and support her husband with the expense of family. She thanked PEP cordially.”

Social Empowerment via PEP Initiatives

PEP initiatives have significantly elevated the economic power of women. Equally important, they have enhanced the social status of these women, providing them with better access to essential services such as education and healthcare (Yuliana, 2020; Kuswanti et al., 2020). This is a testament

to the positive impact of our collective efforts.

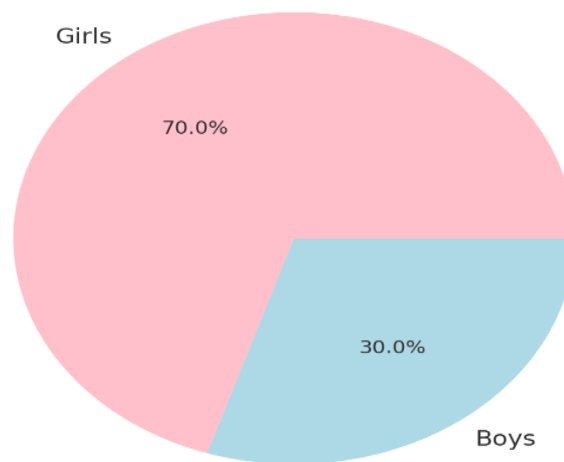
Child Development Centers (CDCs)

PEP has established CDCs of Non-Formal Primary Education (NFBE), which imparts basic primary education to children, including girls (Gabriel, 2013). It has also aimed towards giving employment to educated yet unemployed women who are getting employed as teachers. As of 2017, the total number of children enrolled in CDCs became 1,590, and the district reported that from 1991 -2015, 1640 children had finished two years of primary education.

This pie chart shows the percentage of girls vs. boys enrolled in CDCs, with a discussion on the emphasis on female education and its long-term benefits for gender equality in rural areas. One of the teacher of CDCs shared that-

Figure 7: Enrolment of Children in CDCs

Enrollment of Children in CDCs

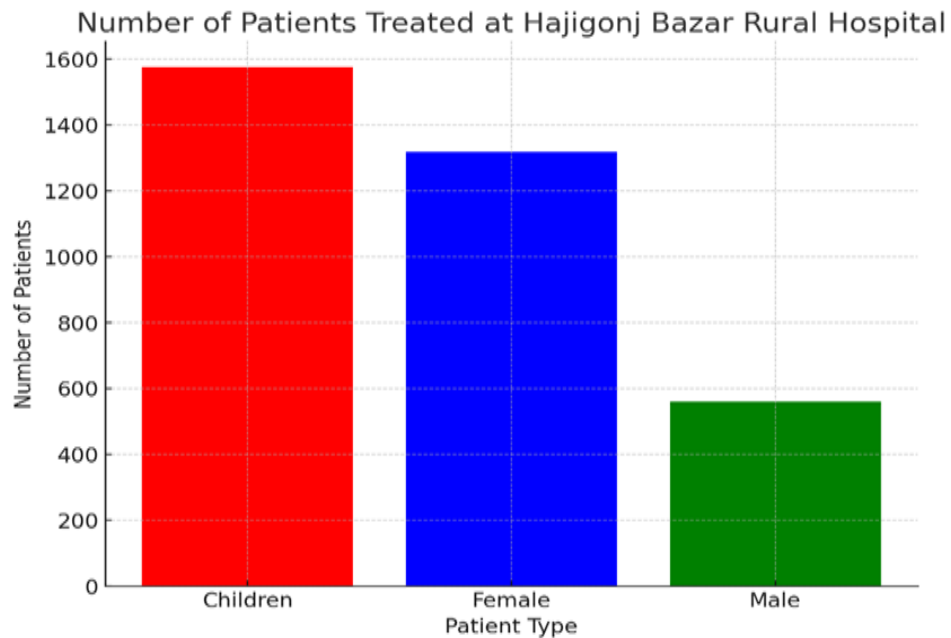


“I had a warm welcome by the students and their teacher. She told that she teaches the children for their betterment and always care about their further education. She also told me that Subarnahar is an underprivileged village, and the opportunity of education was very low before PEP established Child Development Centre. Ms. Parveen added that the result of last batch was outstanding, and many students are continuing their education in local primary school. Many students of CDC are working in Poverty Eradication Program as well as in different organizations after completing their education. Before she joined the CDC school, she had to face a big trouble with the cost of her education. She thanked PEP for giving her an opportunity to the CDC school. She also thanked all the employees and governor body of PEP for taking such steps empowering women.”

Health Care Services

Healthcare services of PEP, especially the Hajigonj Bazar Rural Hospital have played a key role in enhancing health status and well-being of women and children residing at far rural places. This year alone, the facility has treated 1,920 patients already including women and children. This has decreased sickness and death rates, especially during pregnancies and childbirth in the region

Figure 8: Number of Patients Treated at Hajigonj Bazar Rural Hospital



This graph compares the number of men, women, and children who were treated as patients in the hospital, with a focus on women’s and children’s health.

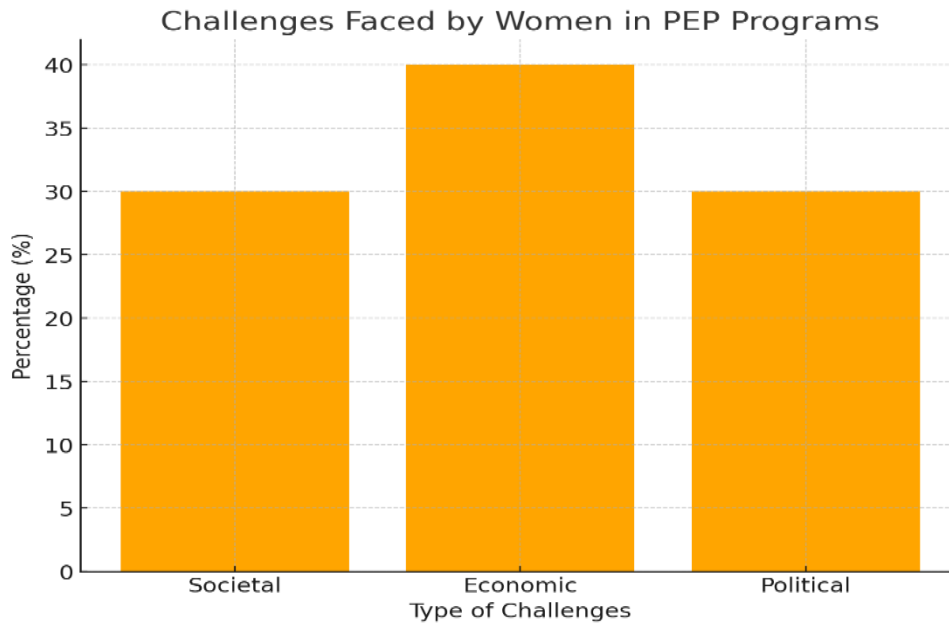
Challenges Faced by Women in PEP’s Programs

While PEP has made significant strides in empowering women, there are still critical challenges that demand our attention. These include societal resistance to change, limited market access to women's products, and the ongoing need for training and support (Beegle & Rubiano-Matulevich, 2020; Bajpai, 2023; Keogh et al., 2020; Shetty & Hans, 2015). The urgency of these issues is underscored by the theft of resources, such as timber from tree plantation programs, which continues to hinder the progress of politically interfered females (Lelea et al., 2022).

Societal Resistance

In spite of the achievements made by this organization so far, there is still a lot more work left undone because many societies resist change, especially when it comes to gender roles, which they consider sacred or traditional. This was evident during an interview conducted with Mrs Morjina Khanom, who participated in roadside plantations, where she said, “We had problems protecting our trees from being stolen” while referring to those planted along highway sides.

Figure 9: Challenges Faced by Women in PEP Programs



A stacked bar chart here could show the different types of challenges (e.g., societal, economic, political) faced by women in various PEP programs, with a discussion on how these challenges are being addressed.

DISCUSSION

According to the findings of this research study in this paper, it was consistent with another comparable study regarding PEP's significant role in boosting women empowerment in rural Bangladesh. In other words, a PEP is an example of the integrated approach to development which equally prescribes the economic, social, and environmental tools and methods to eradicate poverty and improve the status of women's socio-economic conditions (Islam et al., 1970; Wei et al., 2021; Abuiyada, 2018). Micro-credits and income-generating activities such as the rearing of silkworms and stitching of clothes among other activities enable them to make their own money (Rahman, 2021). For example, the social empowerment programs which are largely based on education and health intervention have enabled women's power within the society context and offered a comprehensive technique for poverty alleviation including its social dimension too (Rajeshwari & Shettar, 2015). But there are still such questions as, for example, social constraints or the absence of the ability to access the markets to enable a woman's full engagement (Cornwall, 2014).

As a result of its comprehensive nature, PEP can address poverty on all fronts, ensuring its success. Through the combination of financial power and service provision, it is possible to improve an individual's economic situation and their social standing, which benefits everyone around them (Jamaluddin & Hanafiah, 2020; Nargis, 2019). In addition to educating many children, Child Development Centers (CDCs) have served as places where women can find employment, thus linking education directly with empowerment (PEP, 2017). The healthcare initiatives undertaken by PEP also address critical needs, especially those of women and children, which contribute to the general welfare of these societies (Papanek, 1977). If we are to achieve lasting change, we must address our economic problems as well as our social problems (El-Sadr et al., 2012).

However, this research also highlights several difficulties experienced by females participating in PEP's various programs. Society continues to resist women's full participation in economic activities based on traditional gender roles (Yusuf et al., 2015). It is also possible for resources to be stolen or for political interference to occur, which makes it difficult to sustain such projects (Abdin, 2008). We must always support and fight for what has been achieved through PEP despite

these challenges (Nurlaili et al., 2021; Goldey et al., 1997). To overcome these obstacles, various stakeholders, including local communities, government bodies, and international partners, will have to work together so that the integrated development approach of PEP, which has proven to be effective, is maintained while also being expanded to cover more women in rural Bangladesh (Marcus et al., 2019).

CONCLUSION

The study "Women Empowerment through Integrated Development Approach: A case study of the Poverty Eradication Program (PEP)" provides a broader overview of the empirical findings surrounding how integrated development contributes to women's empowerment in rural Bangladesh. The results of their study indicate that PEP's multi-faceted approach targeting economic, social, and environmental sectors has a significant positive impact on the socio-economic status of women. Programs such as microcredit, sericulture, and health services have assisted women not only in becoming economically independent but also in improving their standing within their communities as a nodal point for holistic development. The fact that certain obstacles remain, such as societal barriers and limited access to the market, emphasizes the need for continuous support systems as well as dynamic strategies in order for women to achieve economic freedom. An example of how economic empowerment can successfully strengthen another, thereby contributing to sustainable changes in gender roles, is the PEP model, a holistic development approach that integrates both financial and non-financial domains. To address such challenges in the future, concerted efforts should be encouraged by all stakeholders to ensure that success is sustained and replicated, and hopefully up scaled, contributing to a more sustained trend of poverty eradication in rural Bangladesh with a more significant contribution from women empowerment.

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Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all the respondents of the study.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Data Availability Statement

Data is available upon request from researchers who meet the eligibility criteria.

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