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**Human Communication in Transitional Period
of BRAC Education Programme**

Exploring the Scopes and Challenges

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ACRONYMS

ADP	Adolescent Development Programme
AM	Area Manager
BEP	BRAC Education Programme
BM	Branch Manager
BPS	BRAC Primary School
BPPS	BRAC Pre-Primary School
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EFA	Education for All
EMF	Education Management Forum
FO	Field Organiser/Officer
HO	Head Office
JFO	Junior Field Officer
KG	Kindergarten
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
PO	Programme Organiser
PS	Programme Staff
RM	Regional Manager
UNO	Upazila Nirbahi Officer
USP	Unique Selling Point

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ABSTRACT

Human communications between and among BRAC staff working at various levels and communities they are working in is an important aspect. It seems to be more important for BRAC Education Programme (BEP) when they started the process of transformation from a philanthropic mode to a cost recovery model. This study, therefore, looked at the communication process of BEP after the introduction of cost recovery mode. Following a qualitative approach, information collection started in the head office under process documentation exercise and continued for a couple of months. The staffs of various components of BEP working at field offices were interviewed and discussion was made with the club members of Adolescent Development Programme (ADP) and with their parents separately. Findings reveal that communication for staffs mostly were taking place of two types– written (circular, e-mails) and verbal (phone calls, meetings, seminars, workshops). Staffs were communicating among themselves and with the communities the context of takings fees and were trying to convince them why they should pay part of the operation cost to have quality education for their children. Doing so, some staffs showed a lack of confidence and were ending up providing vague information to the communities about their products and services. Lack of immediate response from line managers to problems communicated by the frontline staffs were also reported. It was recommended that there should have tangible efforts to energize the field staffs followed by customized training to improve their marketing skills. Monitoring and follow up of communication activities at communities and particularly with the government officials need to be strengthened to ensure that the staffs are doing enough to popularize the new packages and initiatives. Finally, an environment should be created so that the staffs at all levels feel supported in this process of transition.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

BRAC has been running its education programme since 1985 focusing on poor children living in rural areas who either dropped out from mainstream primary schools or never got enrolled. BRAC Education Programme (BEP) started its journey with non-formal, one room one teacher, model of primary schools. Over time, it initiated pre-primary schools, schools for ethnic minorities, multipurpose community learning centres, early childhood development centres, neuro-developmental disabilities centres, adolescent development programme, and many other components. With these efforts, BRAC made a significant contribution to the achievements of Education for All (EFA) and Millennium, Development Goals (MDG) in Bangladesh. Particularly, increasing girls' participation in education resulted for these.

BRAC ran those educational initiatives free of charge as it used to get funding for humanitarian and development work from governments like the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia and from multilateral agencies and foundations like Gates Foundation and others. In 2015 when Bangladesh was declared as a lower middle-income country; it vividly influenced the development sector especially in terms of monetary grants receiving. In accordance with global changes, the development partners are re-evaluating their focus, strategy and financial support for Bangladesh. As a result, the financial aid is shrinking and it is going to decline further in coming years. BRAC contributions in this sector may suffer from under investment and thousands of schools and centres may be closed and thus education may get restricted to fewer and fewer number of students.

After more than four decades of experience working with the grassroots communities, BRAC has noticed that country's economy has been growing and people have been moving out of poverty. Considering the social demand for BRAC schools coupled with a crisis of donor money and people's changing ability to pay, it is felt that 'cost recovery' is not only desirable but also is feasible. And hence it is now doing adjustment and readjustment with education programme and projects with a focus on making those more financially sustainable. Primarily, it is attempting to recover part of the school/centre operation cost from parents. With this paradigm shift, BRAC is trying to change people from the status of beneficiaries to customers, meaning that communities will become buyers, rather than just recipients of free services. From the programmatic side, it is expecting that BEP can perform at the same level as it used to do before with the aid received from donors and still can cater to the needs of increasing number of students. Since creating a difference in the lives of people who live in poverty is the ultimate goal of BRAC, it wants to make sure that the purpose is not sacrificed because of new agenda of becoming self-sustained. Therefore, maintaining the quality of programmes and upholding impacts of BRAC will still get equal attention as before. However, this 'cost recovery' model can also produce several positive and ill-effects, particularly on equity and also on quality and coverage of education.

1.2 HUMAN COMMUNICATION IN BRAC

BRAC acknowledges that tireless efforts of all of its staffs from head office to field offices paved the way for becoming number one NGO of the world in subsequent years. It considers effective communication a rudimentary part of rolling out of any successful programme and follows several communication strategies to establish seamless coordination between departments and/or groups it has. The existing 'open door' policy allows any of its staff to reach others and to discuss different issues and problems quickly and comfortably. It tries ensure that one programme/unit is understanding the work being done by other programme/unit which enabled all the staffs to complement and support each other's work. Following the legacy, to make this 'cost recovery' model successful, BEP needs to provide adequate information about policy changes and targets to achieve to all of its staffs; they need to walk alike they talk. If they are not clear about what, when, how and why then they are not likely to bring out positive changes with this fee-paying education model.

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Information on any organisation flows through various channels including internal and external stakeholders. It is then quite natural that at times it can be difficult to develop a common understanding among all even if everyone

equally understands the issue. Similarly, BEP noticed some concerns with the communication system after changing their mode of operation especially at the field level and identified it as a priority area to be researched immediately.

1.4 THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

It was necessary to critically examine the communication process that was taking place at different tiers within BEP and other programmes of BRAC, and how coordination, integration is happening among different people involved. It was anticipated that such an attempt might help BEP understanding the problems and prospects with communication strategies that were in practice at that time and thus they would be able to address the major areas of tensions to make 'cost recovery' model another success.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study sought to investigate what BEP is doing to communicate 'cost recovery' idea to its staffs and customers and what understandings and reactions exist in the ground. More specifically, this study was designed to answer the following questions:

1. What communications tools are in use to reach key stakeholders precisely?
2. What information different offices and individuals are trying to communicate?
3. What are the responses and reactions to information given? How do different people think and behave in terms of their engagement with BEP for 'cost recovery' model?
4. Is there any change in communication after adopting this model? If so, how?
5. What challenges different people are experiencing while communicating among themselves and how those can be mitigated?

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CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

2.1 DESIGN

This was totally an exploratory and qualitative inquiry. As part of the overall process documentation of BRAC Education Programme (BEP) two studies were initiated and this is one of them. Here the focus was on a single theme that was- communication process. The various components of BEP, the organisational chain, the other programmes like finance and accounts, monitoring, human resources etc they work with were taken into consideration while designing this study. The live experience of education service provider's and user's perspective was documented.

2.2 RESPONDENTS

The respondents of this study were the staffs and beneficiaries of various programme components. Area Managers (AM), Branch Managers (BM), Programme Organisers (PO), Field Organisers (FO) from BEP and parents and adolescents from communities were purposively chosen as respondents. A total of 15 interviews were taken at BEP area, branch, school, and centre level. A purposeful selection was done to find respondents and doing so existing contacts were used to identify persons and their locations.

2.3 DATA COLLECTION

Field data were collected from 30 July 2017 to 03 August 2017. One interview guide was developed aligning with the five research questions and questions

were asked based on the relevancy of different respondents of different programme. The questions focused on themes like, why BRAC incorporated cost recovery approach, how effective is the existing communication process, how field employees communicate with line managers etc. The Interviews were semi-structured and lasted on average one hour. Interviews were recorded and later were used in the thematic analysis.

2.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

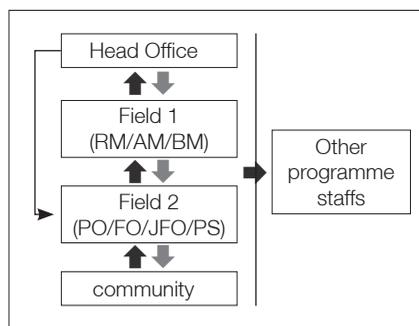
To ensure privacy, names of the respondents have been removed and were expressed in the report as respondent category according to their organisational positions. The location of the study, areas, names of schools and clubs were also kept confidential.

CHAPTER THREE

FINDINGS

3.1 USUAL HUMAN COMMUNICATION CHAIN, PROCESS AND CONTENT

It was found that information in BEP usually was flowing through several steps. Decisions were mostly taken at Head Office and then those were shared with field level officials like Regional Managers (RM), Area Managers (AM) and Branch Managers (BM). These are considered as mid-level management positions in the field who find less opportunity to directly communicate with the community and this group is referred as Field 1 in this report. Field 1 people circulate all types of information and news to their colleagues at the frontline including Programme Organisers (PO), Field Officers (FO), Junior Field Officers (JFO), and Programme Staff (PS) and are referred as Field 2 here. These people disseminate the messages received from Field 1 to the target groups and communities. Communication takes place in a bottom-up approach as well, meaning that communities also communicate to staffs at Field 2 who later contact with their line managers at Field 1 to inform those updates and concerns as appropriate to these individual positions. However, the first approach was found more dominant rather the later one. They do not only communicate with colleagues involved with BEP, they have to come across colleagues from other BRAC programmes as per need on a daily basis. The common communication chain can be drawn like this one presented on the right side.



Regarding process, it was found that information was mainly circulated both in written and verbal format. Written format mostly involved circulars, e-mails and different communication materials. Verbal communication simultaneously took place through meetings, workshops, seminars, and one-to-one discussion over phone etc. The head office staffs called the field staffs over phone to learn programme updates and on monitoring purpose. On the other hand the field staffs also called head office staffs seeking explanation to instructions and guidance on operation.

The commonest content that this study found most people talked about using either of the media discussed before was- why BRAC decided to charge tuition fees for their service after a long history of philanthropic activity. This information was continuously shared with each other from the very beginning of cost recovery approach since 2016. As a result, it was found that almost all the staffs interviewed had knowledge about the context of charging fees. They could explain the changed economic status of the country, foreign aid reduction, improved social awareness, increased literacy rate etc. and how all these changed the national and global perspectives. Although very few of them, particularly the frontline staffs, could not explain these issues persuasively.

3.2 HUMAN COMMUNICATION AT HEAD OFFICE

Since programme related major decisions were taken at head office, communication among BEP staffs working there was found to be multi-lateral which became most important than other field level offices. Some regular scheduled communication events like monthly coordination meeting, education management forum (EMF) meeting etc. were observed and were reported to be in practice. Beside these, they also organised and/or participated in need-based inter and intra group meetings and formal sharing sessions like town hall meetings, workshops with field staffs, presentations on research, and monitoring findings and so on. Before holding these sessions various agendas were set and were taken approval from top management. Statistics generated from MIS data of BEP and experience gathered by different staffs while running programme were time-to-time seen to be in use in these formal, semi-formal, informal sharing events to understand the situation and to take decision accordingly. With many of such exercises and with the help of field staffs, they take decisions like annual target of BEP, operation plan to reach goals set, budget to be used for individual components, projects, specific purposes etc. However, often it was observed that some of the agendas from the long list were not discussed/addressed properly due to inappropriate distribution of time for individual issues. As a result, missing agendas were pushed back keeping decisions pending for those. In addition, a major concern regarding accuracy and consistency of data was sometimes expressed in almost all meetings by several staffs responsible for

specific components. In such cases, decision-making process became very time consuming and complicated.

3.3 HUMAN COMMUNICATION BETWEEN HEAD OFFICE AND FIELD 1

To provide update or to do joint planning on ‘cost recovery’ model, representatives from field offices, mostly Regional Managers (RMs) and Area Managers (AMs) and in few cases Branch Managers (BMs) of all components of BEP, either together or categorically, were invited to attend sharing meetings organised by HO. These meetings were held in different venues all over the country where senior members of HO including director, programme head, programme coordinator were present. They provided their speeches and directions about management of education with the cost recovery model. Issues like what was the national budget, what was the literacy rate, what was the percentages of girl’s participation in education, what was the nutrition status in the 70s and 80s and related other information was compared with the present status in these meetings. On which ground BRAC is changing its policy, in what direction the country is heading forward and what role BEP can play in this situation were also communicated. After all these debates, discussions with field level staffs and many other small and large group meetings with HO teams final decisions are made. Different formal and official *poripotro* (circular) were issued later for field offices signed by programme director or other officials within their jurisdictions. For 2017, several such circulars were reported to be communicated which contained all the information about potential target group, required age of children, how to get school house and what would be its rent, what would be teacher’s salary, what to do with ultra poor, how many meetings to conduct before opening school, how to value opinions given by the communities, and so on. The Regional Managers (RMs) were the first field level staffs who received these circulars and later re-circulate to AMs and BMs. That means, targets, instructions, materials and others were given to RMs first who later disseminated those among AMs and BMs. Generally implementation activities were reported to start from the area offices; all the operational rules and guidelines, communication materials, ways to deal with community etc. were disseminated at this level. Ultimately, AMs were the first authority at the field level where BMs and POs used to go for initial clarifications, instructions and troubleshooting. Simultaneously, AMs were the major channel that conveyed messages from the field to RMs. Apart from these communication efforts, designated persons based in HO responsible for individual projects/components/tasks were said to keep regular contact with field 1 staffs over phone/email to monitor progress or to get update of the filed activities. Field 1 staffs were also reported to discuss with HO people in case any confusion, problem emerged during implementation of the activities. They also sent different reports HO through email.

It was reported that the formal *poripotro* (circular) containing instructions for 'cost recovery' model was sent to field offices as late as March/April in 2016 which created some confusions and resulted mismanagement to some extent. However, in 2017, this was sent during early January which was more convenient for staffs to plan properly. Sometimes field 1 staffs needed to send hard copies to HO which they said very time consuming and can be eased through an online procedure. Field 2 staffs mentioned about serious gap in communication regarding feasibility of assignment/target taken by field 1 staffs from HO. They were concerned that field 1 staffs did not negotiate well enough with HO before setting region, area, and branch level targets; rather they were keen to please them by being overambitious. One Programme Organiser (PO) said that, '*The managers do not execute the targets, they just receive and pass the news to us. Most of the time they do not think whether it is doable or not. In recent time, this tendency increased because nobody wants to be blacklisted and get fired. But, we fall in great danger while implementing those.*'

3.4 HUMAN COMMUNICATION BETWEEN FIELD 1 AND FIELD 2

Communication between field 1 and field 2 was reported to happen both in formal and informal ways and this mainly focused operational points in their day-to-day implementation of the programme. The Regional Managers (RMs) received certain targets and goals from HO and then they divided the targets and distributed those among different area and branch offices. The BMs communicated the same with POs in a similar way. In general, these messages were conveyed orally.

Circulars, as major formal communication, sent from HO generally reached field 2 staffs through those marked as Field 1, especially through Branch Managers (BMs) from the group. As they received and read any particular circular, their signatures were taken on a prescribed sheet as a proof of their acknowledgement receiving the information and reading it. Then these were stored in personal files of all staffs so they can read further and can use when necessary for future clarification.

A weekly staff meeting at branch level was said to be another important communication platform to bridge these two group of staffs at field. Out of four such staff meetings that took place in a month, two covered academic and two others covered administrative issues. Area Managers (AMs) and Regional Managers (RMs) attended some of these meetings, although not regularly. With these meetings, staffs were involved with setting their branch level targets and making own plan of actions to achieve those goals and finally took approval from immediate line manager/s, as appropriate. They communicated with each other on this issue and formulated a plan. For

example, one Programme Organiser (PO) of Adolescent Development Programme (ADP) explained what technique they agreed to follow to collect membership fee of the participants from communities. She said,

We had classified the community into three categories based on their positivity towards paying fees. Those were most positive, somewhat positive (who needs more motivation) and negative communities. We selected some clubs from the most positive communities and collected membership fee for the whole year rather taking monthly fees from each clubs. This resulted as an effective fee collection approach and a very crucial outcome of the programme at that time.

Field 1 staffs were not just communicating/instructing staffs of Field 2 what to do and which strategies to follow, they claimed that in addition to their role as manager/supervisor they sometimes engage themselves deal communities directly. When POs faced severe problem in fields they came up with advanced techniques to do damage control or to convince the negative communities. They, sometimes, conducted community meetings in hard to convince areas. They also tried to groom POs as much as they could regarding ways to resolve problems while taking fees.

With the changed context of BEP in recent time, staffs at both field 1 and 2 improvised some other newer techniques for better communication and took more responsibilities than before at individual levels to take immediate measures at the community level. According to an AM, *'Immediate responses from our side are needed now-a-days. Those practices gone away when we had enough time to wait for decisions coming from HO and executing anything after having that.'* This was confirmed by a PO of that area who gave the following example supporting his statement regarding quick response made by his line supervisor. He said,

I was having a hard time convincing a community to pay for education. After sharing the severity of this problem with AM, he assigned his best performing PO to work in that community on an ad-hoc basis for getting motivation up of the parents who were capable of paying tuition but were procrastinating using different excuses.

In some components, lower number of staffs created a major challenge while communicating from Field 1 and 2. Especially in the Early Childhood Development (ECD), there were no provision of BMs which was affecting a lot in local decision-making. According to one AM, *'I currently look after 224 ECD centres in 17 branches. It is impossible for me to go to each centre though I go to the field every single day. During fee collection time, I need to visit 4-5 branches at the same time. Even after that I cannot respond to all the issues my POs raise.'* One PO of ECD shared his experience,

Sometimes some of the parents cannot pay tuition fees at all because of sudden natural calamities, some other can pay only a portion of the total fee. I become very confused at that situation. I don't know what I should do with them. Should I take whatever they are giving or erase child's name from the centre? On the other hand, I also have a pressure to fill-up the target. There's no one available in the field where I can go to discuss with this type of problems. I often need to take the decision without consulting with anyone as we have very few line managers.

3.5 HUMAN COMMUNICATION FROM FIELD 2 TO COMMUNITY

During interviews, most of the staffs at Field 2 mentioned that they knew convincing community to pay tuition fees might be difficult but would not be impossible. They also said that they had a history of executing harder tasks and this time they would be successful in communicating the new idea. Some of them felt that they would benefit if communities were provided with through explanation of the matter and honesty to promises were kept from their sides.

Most of the staffs explained that initially they dedicated themselves to communicate the community on which ground BRAC was taking the 'cost recovery' approach. To do this they were trying to reach related stakeholders of their individual components through community meeting, parents meeting, mothers meeting, and meeting with other members of the society who were involved with any BRAC programme other than BEP. In these events, they were using several written guidelines, handout and other communication materials provided by HO to help community understand the changed economical context of the country and as a consequence of that what change BRAC was bringing in their educational provisions.

Overall, it was found that some field staff used the following examples during community briefing. Field 2 staffs started with World Bank's declaration about Bangladesh being a lower-middle income country in a way understandable to the mass. They asked community questions like - how many people were able to take three meals a day ten years back, how many clothes they used to wear at that time, and how many children got enrolled to schools? Then they discussed about changes they were now seeing in their daily lives. Majority of our population who used to take one meal or two with one curry only now have three meals and can add vegetables, *daal* (lentils), fish/meat/milk etc. in their menu. Most of the people, especially the villagers, used to walk to long distance to buy items they needed or to visit their family and friends, now they can afford a *rickshaw* for their daily travelling to nearest

locations. Finally, community members were asked, did not their personal income increase as well? Using these types of examples, they pointed out the economic changes happened so far in the country and how that affected to shrink foreign aid that used to come in Bangladesh. Narrating the situation, communities were also asked- should BRAC stop educating their children just because the foreign funds were unavailable? Or should not the community take some ownership to keep BRAC schools running for their children by sharing some of its operating cost?

According to a Field Organiser (FO) of BRAC Pre-Primary School (BPPS), they told some parents, particularly the fathers, that they spend more amount than tuition fees of their children each month at BRAC school for buying tobacco products. They appealed to those fathers to think how they were exploiting their children by depriving them from better quality education. They applied the same explanation for fathers who do not use tobacco products may spend money in tea stalls. Another Programme Organiser (PO) of BRAC Primary School (BPS) said that they brought references from religious practices to motivate parents. They mentioned that, every religion tells parents to provide better education to their children and if they fail to do so there will be consequences for that. References of former students of BRAC schools who created good examples in the community by their educational performances were used to communicate and how the life of future students also can be changed if they (parents) help BEP running, said another PO from BPS.

It was reported that Field 2 staffs were spending extra hours with communities to convince the parents who did not like the ‘cost recover’ idea and were unwilling to pay tuition fees. In some cases, they contacted/invited/brought member/s and chairman from local government institutions, head teachers from nearest secondary schools, and other respected persons from the community to help convincing parents of prospective students. These people were chosen based on their previous engagements with BRAC activities. In their speech, they briefed that BRAC school has good records in communities and people in other villages are willing to pay a part of the expenditure, as they believe that good quality education will be provided there. Listening about this BRAC education brand from persons the communities knew before helped to improve their understanding and to change their attitude for ‘cost recovery’ approach.

One Branch Manager (BM) of BPS mentioned that after starting to take tuition, he found many people in the communities who were curious to know the actual cost of running a BRAC school. When he illustrated a clear comparative picture of total cost versus total earning from fees, people understood that BRAC was still bearing the major expenses and parents were paying for a small portion. Having this explanation, they became convinced and briefing in such way was proven to be a good technique. Apart from

that, community were told that tuition fees would only be taken from capable families and the remaining others like ultra poor and those with a child with special needs would be provided stipend of different categories. Because, BRAC realizes the difficulties of some parents may have in some places and in some communities. Therefore, there would be special provisions for special circumstances and BRAC will not allow any dropout just because of families' inability to pay tuition fee for their children in real grounds. However, it was also communicated that there would be certain mechanisms so that community would not consider this special provisions as a general practice applicable for all regardless of the economic situation of families and capable families could exploit BRAC by not contributing tuition fees. Whatever the case, it was confirmed by Field 2 staffs that students of BRAC schools must get justice in this regard and therefore communities much not worry much about that.

According to a PO of BPS, they finally told parents that if they wanted to comply with new BRAC rules and requirements then they could open/run the school in that community. However, they only could open a school where communities showed interest and they returned back from the villages where there were less number of interested parents. From their overall interactions and experiences with this process, several Field 2 staffs claimed that due to their increased communication with communities, more number of guardians agreed to pay tuition fees and were contributing accordingly. One AM of ADP pointed that, *'The community people are not fool, and they understand when they are properly explained. They still think it is important to know what BRAC is offering for them.'*

There were some reported difficulties in the process of communicating communities. One PO of ADP said that whenever the parents saw her approaching, they started telling each other that, *'There's the apa (madam) from BRAC coming to talk about money again,'* Attitude of similar kind created a serious problem from staff's side to get easy access in the communities for some time. When people were even unwilling to listen to BRAC staffs, convincing them remained far away. The same PO expressed that she was hurt with such community reactions and sometimes felt insulting as well, but she took it as a challenge. To change community's mind-set, she increased communication with parents and did not mention about money at all for some days rather she kept talking about ADP activities and how those interventions could benefit their children. However, there were instances where none of the tricks taken by some of the staffs at Field 2 worked to get the expected results.

One BM of BPS pointed it out that some of his POs were not getting success convincing parents just because of the differences different people have in their ways of communication. In such cases, he was using his best performing POs as resource persons to help others in the field and to train them as well.

By this way, according to him, other POs were learning what information the hired one was communicating to get more community responses. He concluded that sharing practical examples from the experiences of the hired persons was building confidence to others who were lagging behind in terms of developing community consensus for recovering costs.

3.6 WHAT COMMUNITIES COMMUNICATE BACK?

What communities communicated back listening the ‘cost recovery’ idea was asked to BEP staffs during the interview. According to a Programme Organiser (PO) of BRAC Pre-Primary School (BPPS), she received mixed feelings from communities. Few parents with some classes of education challenged her telling that they did not believe BRAC could charge fees from students and they asked for official documents. In this regard, she found the *poripotro* (circular) as a very powerful instrument to make the community understand. Because, when interested parents read it they realised and later contributed to making others understand the explanation given in the papers. Some parents wanted to see money receipt for tuition fee collection, he added. When that was shown, their confusions reduced and they appreciated the system BRAC was applying to ensure transparency. Overall, BRAC staffs found following categories of people and reactions with this process. There were some parents who told them that they knew about middle income country status of Bangladesh from television, family and friends. They requested BRAC to continue the existing schools or opening new ones and they showed their motivation to pay tuition fees. They said that they decided to send their children to BRAC schools and they did not need further explanation. Parents of this group gave a single condition that they would pay tuition fees timely if BRAC could ensure quality education. They wanted to see their children performing like students of previous batches. There were some other parents who said that they only could pay a part of the amount that BRAC charges. Therefore, they requested to cut tuition fees in a figure that most of the parents could afford. Some other parents argued that they were poor and they could not pay tuition fees, but they were very positive about BRAC schools. Parents of this group said that it would be good if BRAC provided their children education free of cost like before. Remaining other parents reacted as they did not want to hear much ‘lectures’ from BRAC staffs because they viewed charging tuition fees as a ‘way of cheating’ only. Parents of this group said if they had to pay tuition fees, they would pay it to Kindergarten (KG) schools, not in BRAC schools.

According to a Branch Manager (BM) of BPPS, when parents started paying tuition fees they became more aware of their child’s education– when the teacher is coming to school, what she is teaching, what is the improvement of the children and so on. Even she found some parents who were interested

to inform her over phone or in person if they had anything to inform about teacher's quality or something else about their school. Moreover, she got a signal from the community that if they failed to improve quality of education then it would be even more difficult for them to collect tuition fees. Thus, she viewed that staffs were now becoming more accountable to the community.

Some parents requested BRAC to engage 'good' teachers who will be able to teach English and grammar properly and would be able to improve education quality of the school, complete syllabus fully and so on. Another BM of BPS said that they responded to parental concern for involving 'good' teacher by requesting them to identify five-six women from the village whom they consider to be useful for their school. Later on one teacher who matched with the requirement was chosen in consultation with them.

3.7 COMMUNICATION THROUGH OTHER BRAC PROGRAMMES

Usually different BRAC programmes like community empowerment, education, health, microfinance, and so on provide services in the same community. According to a PO of ADP, cooperation between all the staffs working in the same community is important. In response to the question why it was saying so, she replied that once one PO of microfinance programme was caught by the community and they were creating a chaos there. Then one teacher of BPS and one PO of BEP went to help them and finally solved the problem. Regarding inter-programme cooperation, another PO of BPPS said, *'Most of our programmes work at the same village and target almost same group, if we help each other with information, ultimately BRAC will be benefitted.'* Realising the potential of joint meeting, all the BRAC staffs working under a branch office sit together once in a month for sharing and open discussion. Using that platform, they get to know other's problems and find way forward. BEP staffs mentioned that they received information regarding suitable places for opening schools/clubs and potential students/members from the staffs of other programme who work in the same community and they personally sought for help from all the other staffs as per need.

As described earlier, direct beneficiaries of any of BRAC programme are found in many communities of the country. They become informed about any new product, service, and change of BRAC through these programme specific networks. Parents in some cases get updated information from those of their village who are working as BRAC staff at many levels and they believe what is said by them. Similarly, BEP staffs confirmed that they found some people in the community who came to know in advance about the changes in education programme through their personal engagements mentioned earlier.

Certain discriminations between provisions among different programmes were also reported to be existed at the time of data collection which was contributing negatively for staff motivation. One BM of BPS explained that they had similar job pressure like the staffs of microfinance, but the later used to have more benefits than the former. Furthermore, most of the BEP staffs echoed that they felt like they were under a continuous anxiety regarding job security and changed nature of the job. In some cases, it was also reported that, few staffs from other programmes were involve bullying BEP staffs, especially those who are relatively new in BRAC. An extreme instance of such humiliation was shared by one Field Organiser (FO) of BPPS. According to her, one Branch Manager (BM) from microfinance asked two grade II staffs of BEP to refrain themselves from having lunch at office dining. After that, the Regional Manager (RM) of BEP had to intervene to sort things out. In some branch offices, BEP staffs were referred as tenants since that office was originally entitled for microfinance programme. These types of behaviour increased stress of BEP staffs and lowered their self-esteem and challenged the process of building 'one BRAC'.

3.8 BEP COMPONENT SPECIFIC VARIATIONS IN COMMUNICATION

All the staffs responsible for different components of BEP were trying to motivate communities so that they pay for education BRAC provides. In return, the community wanted quality education and services. Since there were no component-specific, pre-planned marketing strategies for individual components of BEP, field staffs were using their own knowledge and experience while presenting the services to the community. This hampered to have uniformity among all the staffs and areas and in some places some desperate attempts to convince people were reported which created considerable confusions. However, following descriptions will give a sense what staffs of BPS, BPPS, ECD and ADP components were communicating in field about their products and services.

BPS

Staffs working with BPS informed communities that running a school costs more than BDT 12,000 per month to buy teaching-learning materials, to pay rent of school house and BRAC offices and to pay salaries of teachers and staffs from field levels to head office. They argued that one third of this expenditure can be recovered from the community if all the students in a school pay full tuition fees. In reality, that did not happen in most cases. Therefore, BRAC was bearing most of the costs for children of these communities and they were not doing business with it. They urged the parents to think what they would do if they were the owner of this organisation. As far money was

a concern for some of the families in different locations, staffs confirmed that they discussed about scholarship/waiver facilities of some kind would be there to support their needs.

Education quality of BPS was often highlighted by staffs in every meeting with communities. According to a Branch Manager (BM) of BPS, they tried to convince communities telling that they had trained teachers and quality of their school was good when students received education free and they would add further quality since tuition fees are being charged now. They also reminded parents that if this school got shut at that point, it would be hard to get their children admitted to another school in the middle of the primary cycle and may lead to the dropout. However, the teacher of the individual schools was found to be a major player to convenience families to comply with 'cost recovery' approach and those who worked for BPS for a long time was said to be more influential in this regard.

BPPS

As part of communicating communities, staffs responsible for running pre-primary schools provided more emphasis telling what activities usually take place in BPPS, what learning outcomes are targeted, and overall what advantages any child might get participating there. They proclaimed that by attending BRAC pre-primary schools, students get used to formal schooling, learn discipline, letters and numbers, successfully perform school activities etc. This experience builds the foundation of their educational life, lessen their anxieties to attend schools and helps them to be an active learner. Staffs also stressed the educational materials that are being used in these schools. In the meetings, they also brought other parents to share their experiences and how they felt benefitted from this school. Staffs underlined the need for developing creativity among children rather than providing them content teaching. Finally, they pointed out the fact that, this 'good quality' service might become unavailable just for financial shortcomings and if parents contribute that little amount of tuition fee for their children BRAC can continue operating these schools.

ECD

This initiative is quite new at BRAC. People living near the places where ECD centres were piloted in the country in previous years had some understanding about this intervention. However, the sudden scale-up of the programme all over the country put staffs in a situation where they encountered target groups with little or no idea about the service. Moreover, they did not have enough example of ECD centres nearby which could be referred to communities for their individual research. Ultimately, most of the staffs were spending a bulk of their time explaining communities the concept of ECD and advantages children might get out of that.

Communication attempts started with educating communities why three years old children need two years of centre-based care and how these centres are different from regular schooling idea. Staffs discussed what would be included in this two years curriculum and what children would be able to do after completion. They also focused on the fact that keeping a three years old child in this centre would allow his/her mother/care giver a little bit free time. Each mother would also be invited to join with children in these centres sometime in a month from which they might be enriched personally and could be more equipped to support their children at home.

ADP

According to a Field Organiser (FO) of ADP, because of the nature of their work they had to communicate both adolescents and their parents, either separately or together, to convince them to join in this programme. All its staffs, as part of their communication activities, pointed out the social impact that this particular initiative might have on the lives of the participants. They argued with the adolescents and parents about the value different extra curricular and social awareness building activities that usually take place in ADP clubs. It was explained that doing well in examinations is not enough, reading age appropriate books in addition to regular textbooks might increase the knowledge and experience of adolescents. They mentioned that at this point of life all the adolescents go through some physical and mental changes which most of their parents do not or cannot discuss well with them due to long practiced cultural norms and lack of knowledge and awareness about those important issues. Targeted parents were then informed that BRAC developed customised courses or contents to be delivered through these clubs responding to this social dynamics and to breaking the silence that were there. It was highlight that boys of this age in the country, especially in rural areas, are allowed to play or spend time anywhere they like, but girls of the same group have very limited access to entertainment. These clubs will provide both girls and boys the opportunity to join together in the same, secured place in an open mind, leaving behind existing discrimination bestowed to them by societies. Also, sharing experiences with each other can help them to develop physically and mentally. They will get education on adolescent health issues to improve their life skills. Efforts will also be made so that more girls develop as *kishori Netri* (peer leader) who will later contribute to society by preventing early marriage, dowry and some other social challenges that they may encounter as they grow. They will also be provided with basic computer training which will help them in future.

Even after having all these explanations, there were many parents who did not like the idea of adolescent clubs in the locality. They were concerned that their daughters may mix with boys in socially inappropriate manner and other girls also may contaminate and mislead their ones. For them ADP staffs told that everything would happen right before their eyes and they could inspect those activities any time they want.

Most of the staffs mentioned that convincing communities for ADP was comparatively difficult for them than bringing children to BRAC schools. It became even more difficult with the onset of shifting this programme to 'cost recovery' model, they added. Because, they have to continue telling people the significance of the programme and why parents should pay for that. Since BRAC schools have more acceptance to communities, staffs were referring that changes in modalities were brought in those schools as well and most of the parents accepted the new approach already. They also told them the calculation of the total cost of materials and operation and what portion of that total amount they were charging from club members. They put emphasis on that the membership fee is so less that can be arranged easily by selling fruits/vegetables from the yard or saving from pocket money that parents give to their daughter/son.

3.9 EXPECTATION ON COMMUNICATION EFFORTS AND MATERIALS

Timely direction from HO

Until the first quarter of 2016, most staffs of HO and field offices were not fully sure what approaches and strategies to take to shift BEP to a 'cost recovery' model. In absence of a clear direction, staffs were in a fix and went through several tensions. However, official direction, *poripotro* (circular), to open and maintain BRAC schools in 2017 was sent to field offices at the end of December 2016 which helped them to do necessary preparations including targeting and community mobilisation ahead of time. Thus, they expected to have guidelines soonest possible for every actions to take in their future operation.

Clear/concrete instructions on scholarship/waiver

One Programme Organiser (PO) of BPS viewed that they found certain special provisions in *poripotro* (circular) for 'hard-to-reach' areas in general. To him, providing them clear instructions that specifically states how many of the students will be brought under special provisions like scholarship/waiver from which *upazilas*, branches, components, schools on what ground will ease their selection and service delivery. Another PO of BPPS wanted prompt communication during emergencies like sudden floods or any other hazard that make newer areas 'hard-to-reach' and lead families to live in miserable conditions and education of their children turns into bottom position in their priority list.

Properly informing local level government bodies

According to a Branch Manager (BM) of BPS, *Upazila* Nirbahi Officer (UNO) of his area came to know that BRAC is charging tuition fees, and asked whether government approved this or not. He suggested that, BEP needs to find out how District BRAC Representative (DBR) can inform to the senior government officials of district and *upazila* level properly about any changes made in the education programme. Additionally, distributing printed materials to the related government offices can make more people aware of BRAC activities and those would definitely minimise existing confusions.

More involvement of Field 1 staffs for community mobilisation

To improve current communication efforts, one PO from BPS said more supports are expected from their line management. While convincing or activating some communities, he was struggling to get success and he found voices of BMs, AMs and RMs more powerful and effective. He also added that he noticed a general tendency of people that they value a third person even if s/he tells the same thing to the communities.

Comprehensive marketing for ECD

One PO of this component urged for serious marketing to promote the idea to the community. He suggested making video content and promoting the concept in national media. Putting banners and signboards consisting key features of ECD centres and its importance at local markets or other public places can help promoting the idea effectively, he added. Also, creating some model villages in different parts of the country before scaling up can familiarise the community with the concept and can bring long-term benefit.

Restructuring ADP activities and selling those properly

One PO of ADP stressed on rethinking the currently offered courses and its contents. She found that adolescents and their families are showing more interest on ICT training than other courses. Therefore, she suggested that there should have clear guidelines on how to integrate ICT more with these clubs and how to communicate importance of the new and existing items to the community.

Ensuring all staffs are talking alike

One Field Organiser (FO) of BPS suggested that branch level coordination meetings should be used effectively to inform staffs of all the programmes about the changes that are happening with BEP. Also, help from all working with BRAC can be requested through a common instruction coming from central level to inform communities and to mobilise them for the cause, he added.

Gossips, rumours to stop

One Area Manager (AM) of BPS mentioned that as of the 'cost recovery' model was unveiled they came across so many gossips and rumours about organisational changes every day. Those negative messages passed quickly from one staff to other and increased uncertainties and frustrations among all lessening their productivity. For example, one staff said him someday that she heard from someone else that field level BEP staffs with more than 20 years of engagement with BRAC would get retrenchments at the end of 2017. He had nothing to answer and felt helpless in front of a person he supervises. He could not even claim that it was a rumour that had no authentication. He does not want to deal with these types of rumours anymore. He expects clear messages from concerned programme about any change that is going to happen in the coming days and this will ultimately help staffs to focus on their role than unnecessarily worrying about their job.

3.10 FIELD COMMUNICATION: MADE EASY

According to several BEP staffs, there were some privileges for them to work with BRAC because of its national and global acceptance for delivering services for those who needed most. They reported some positive aspects of the organisation that made their communication efforts easy during the relatively hard time they were passing through regarding managing the recent changes in BEP. Some members of the community opined the same about scopes of BRAC. A list of that will follow next-

BRAC's brand value

BRAC's history providing education for children, presence all over the country and overall the 'brand' it has created over the years helped BEP field staffs to convince community to pay tuition fees in this changing situation. The brand, at the same time, created some problems in the beginning of communicating 'cost recovery' idea. Many from the community expressed like, *'It is unbelievable that BRAC as a giant organisation can ask for money from the poor.'* However, at the end of the day, those people agreed to pay trusting the same BRAC brand and said *'It cannot exploit them.'* On this ground, most staffs interviewed viewed that drastic changes could be made by them in future if BRAC brand would be used strategically.

Already convinced communities

While providing education to children in underserved locations, BEP staffs had already developed excellent rapport with communities that they worked. These communities helped staffs a great deal to convince those who were un-willing or half-willing to send their children to BRAC schools when tuition fees were charged. Apart from them, some well-known personalities of those

un-willing communities played a crucial role in this regard. They influenced people demonstrating what this ‘cost recovery’ model of intervention could bring for them in the long run.

Participatory workshops/seminars with staffs from all levels

BEP staffs from HO organised several workshops and seminars at different parts of the country and brought Field 1 and Field 2 staffs, either separately or altogether based on the issue/s discussed, as participants. Staffs joined in these events were given the environment to talk fearlessly which they could not dare to bring in front of their immediate supervisor in the field due to the usual discomfort and/or alarm of consequences. Feedback given or comments made by them were appreciated by all. Moreover, the participants found these events as important platforms to disseminate instructions all over the country in a consistent manner, which also helped them to resolve some of the confusions they had.

Innovative ways of solving local problems

Staffs involved with BEP found that they were always encouraged to be innovative in their planning and executions. Recently, to achieve the target, they came up with newer solutions of their problems. It was reported that Branch or Area offices were using their best performing staffs as a resource person to help and train others in that locations who were having trouble to deliver services as expected. This tendency of seeing a broader picture together and cooperation to solve the problems marked as another innovation and asset for future.

3.11 FIELD COMMUNICATION: CHALLENGES AHEAD

During interviews, most of the field staffs viewed that they were not seeing much challenges in terms of communication. They rather said that they were getting information as the way it was given them during philanthropic model of education provisions. On further questions, they only mentioned a few problems that they encountered of which some were already solved. Despite the fact, some of the challenges are discussed here so that BEP can find ways to train its staffs to respond those properly.

Unfocused presentation about unique selling point (USP) of services

Since most staffs were previously involved with delivering philanthropic model, some of them were reported to be uncomfortable presenting the community that fees would be taken instead of free services. From programme side, staffs were not told clearly what would be the activities of each component in ‘cost recovery’ model. Thus, many of them were lacking confidence on what

to sell, how to sell and so on. They were struggling to plan how attractively they could communicate those products to communities.

Unconvinced parents/community taking more time

It was reported that there were some parents in every communities who appeared against 'cost recovery' model of BEP who were deliberately demotivating many others interested to pay tuition fees. Negative contributions made by them intensified the challenges of staffs in communicating people for their new idea and were hampering programme operation. And staffs, in general, were not well groomed before to respond to this type of challenge who were failing to convince this portion of the target group.

Demotivating comments to BEP staffs by other colleagues

Some staffs at the branch level, especially from the microfinance, sometimes made fun with their BEP colleagues telling that, *'Now there is no difference between you and me since we both are taking money from the community.'* Some of them discouraged the strategy of taking tuition with a view that it would not be possible for BEP. Their explanation was that, *'We provide money to community and struggle to collect it back; but what BEP will give the children that their parents should pay to BRAC.'*

Information got stuck at some points

While disseminating from head office to field offices or vice versa, some information was reported to be screened out at somewhere in between which challenged the uniformity of the matter. It was found that field managers and HO officials told two different sets of targets to Programme Organisers (POs). This was reported to develop tangible confusions among the POs as they worked in the frontline and their voices were less heard in this target setting. An interesting pattern was observed while any information was returning back from field offices to head office. Actual field situation was most known to POs, Branch Managers (BMs) and Area Managers (AMs), but they were reported to hide something when they were communicating to Regional Managers (RMs). The RMs did the same thing while communicating to staffs at head office. This was again reported to be happening because none of them wanted to be listed as low performing staff or marked as low performing branch, area, and region. However, due to this tendency, some problems were not been communicated in a formal way, therefore taking actions were delayed.

Decision-making at field level was getting further restrictions

In general, decision-making process of BEP was said to be very centralised. Significant decisions were taken at the HO and then were disseminated to field offices. Most field staffs at different levels mentioned that they used to enjoy liberty of some extent in making operational decisions for their areas.

As per the newer requirements set, they could not define hard-to-reach areas during emergencies even though they knew the local situation better than anybody. They struggled to collect tuition fees at that time waiting for a special permission to come from HO. Some of them also said that they were not properly talked before determining how many schools/centres to open in their areas in recent school years. They felt really bad for having no ownerships to the decisions and their pain increased when they were failing to reach those targets.

Anxiety of losing job

In several phases within last few years, number of BEP staffs at HO and field was reduced. It was noticed during data collection of this study that downsizing added a vulnerability feeling among most current staffs and they were going through anxieties regarding job security. In one hand they were failing to concentrate fully on tasks assigned to them because of job related frustrations, in other hand they had to face the challenges of achieving targets given to them. This constant pressure turned their motivation to go down and hampered their critical thinking to innovate new ideas for effective communication.

Increased workload of staffs

Most staffs at field almost equally commented that they found the number of total employees in BEP decreased drastically in recent years. As a result of that staff shortage, workload of the existing ones increased than before. For example, according to a Programme Organiser (PO) of BPS, he was monitoring school quality, collecting fees, attending monthly meetings, organising refresher training, and time to time responding to immediate calls from higher officials and so on and after doing all these things he was not getting enough time needed for detailed community level communication.

Lack of immediate response to the problems

Most field staffs, especially the front liners, mentioned that during implementing their day-to-day activities they encountered some problems that needed to be discussed with line managers for their immediate responses to resolve those. It was reported that due to shortage of line managers and caseloads of the existing ones they were unreachable in cases and in other cases they could not offer immediate feedback even though they were informed about. When their physical presence was expected they could not do so because of their other engagements with different schools or offices. Problems created by this delay or no response from supervisors limiting productivity of their fellow colleagues.

Lack of acceptable dataset

HO based senior officials of BEP expressed their concerns several times regarding unavailability of updated and synchronised dataset while decision making. They found lack of consistency among data which was collected from different sources and according to them that was creating considerable amount of confusions. Collection and analysis of this type of data was taking time, money and human resources in one hand and in other hand decision-making based on questionable dataset was reported to be unable to communicate facts and figures properly.

Time was too short

It was observed that most meetings that held at HO were full with too many agendas. Since time allotted for those meetings were not sufficient enough to discuss all the issues from the wish list, most times they had to prioritise those need immediate attention. As a result, discussions on some topics were noticed to be postponed more than once and that was hindering the process of decision-making in those areas which were no less important than others. Ultimately, no decisions equalled to no communications for field offices. The same thing was reported to happen in meetings that took place in field offices as well.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 DISCUSSION

In this study, it was found that communication between BEP staffs working at different levels was taking place both formally and informally using both verbal and written means. *Poripotro* (circulars) containing detailed guideline on programme operations was found to be most trusted and helpful written communication tool. Similarly, telephonic conversation with the line managers for local level troubleshooting of the day-to-day field level activities was reported to be very helpful as well. Formal meetings among field level staffs and dissemination seminars, workshops arranged by HO for the field colleagues were viewed as important activities for their better understanding of the 'cost recovery' model and for getting clarification of several instructions given for this cause. Home visits, parents meeting, yard meeting, meeting with beneficiary of other BRAC programmes were some several techniques taken to communicate community effectively.

Most staffs interviewed mentioned that communication between all the levels had increased drastically after adopting 'cost recovery' approach. Staffs at different levels and of different components were communicating with others focusing on their very own perspectives. Such as, the HO and Field 1 staffs were busy communicating operation plan and decisions made time to time. Communication with line managers was reported to increase as front line staffs needed solutions to fast changing emerging situations. Line managers also viewed that they were also seeing no alternative of effective discussion. They said that they were trying to provide constant attention and explanation to concerns and queries directed to them by their fellow colleagues. At the same time they acknowledged that they could not provide needed support

in cases because of their increase job pressure in supervising multiple areas, branches and hundreds of staffs working in those capacities. They sometimes temporarily deployed another staff to solve difficulties other colleagues were facing in their centres/schools. Some officials from HO and senior colleagues from field were involved in communicating other staffs about programme updates again and again to so the anxieties that were there regarding their perceived job uncertainty. Field 2 staffs were mostly seen to communicate community about overall change in country's economic context and rationale for charging tuition fees. They were explaining to parents that expenses for BRAC education could be easily managed by them from saving from other expenditures. That is, communities were told that BRAC understood paying tuition fees might not be the first priority to many of them, but if they could make little compromise, good quality education of their children could be ensured. However, in the long run, how people will react to a fee based service can be a good food for thought.

It was evident from previous studies that parents who had some class of education, who had another child studying in BRAC school, who were involved with any other BRAC programme, who had the ability to pay tuition fees agreed with 'cost recovery' model of education. Most staffs also mentioned that in those communities where BEP staffs spent more time to communicate well became the most positive communities. In this situation, all the staffs from field and HO opined that proper communication and maintaining quality of the educational provisions would be crucial to attract and retain target group of children. They also said that even though most of the communities considered BRAC tuition fees high but if they could be satisfied with quality, they might be ready to buy it next time even with a higher price. In order to achieve that, constant and effective communication among all levels is necessary. Conducting meetings, communicating with the community and parents, communicating within the programme and increasing quality of the service need to be done at the same time. Simultaneously, demonstrating school activity that shows the academic outcome of children along with convening the progress/messages to parents directly should be sufficient enough to get success with this new model.

Before introducing 'cost recovery' mode, the staffs mainly discussed and communicated operation plan and strategy with stakeholders and team members. However after the course was set to collect fees and achieving targets, the communication plan got new dimensions. They needed to convince the people into buying the same package of service which they got for free for years by elaborating the change of the economical status of the country and overall increase of income. Naturally, many were having difficulties performing this very crucial task as very few of them had communication training and as a result they could not uphold the service provisions attractively. At that time the staffs themselves and their field supervisors jointly innovated new ways to approach the target group. With a target to

achieve ahead it was not a simple task to do. In this regard, communication training, and written descriptions of the programme objectives and details could be helpful.

4.2 CONCLUSION

When ‘cost recovery’ model was initiated, BEP experienced some problems originated from lack of communication among staffs and for their inability to communicate communities properly. This happened mostly because decisions taken at that time were not consistent enough and communities got puzzled listening to frequently changing ideas with BRAC schools. They started asking over and over the rationales behind different instructions on charging fees. Though much of these tensions are now under control, but challenges of communication will always be there. Since one miscommunication is able to hamper months of hard work, it needs detailed attention and well-designed training packages to make each staff an effective communicator. And to ensure quality in education, BEP must think bringing changes in old packages and initiating new contents.

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and needs expressed by the staffs, several recommendations are given here:

► Energising the field staffs

Immediate initiatives need to be taken to boost up motivation of all the field staffs by sending them clear messages from higher officials about future of their job. Process of staff downsizing should be stopped at some point with official announcement. If needed to do so further, individual staffs need to be notified soonest possible clarifying how long his/her commitment is expected by BRAC. Without removing current uncertainty feeling of staffs, full contribution from their sides is too much to expect. Also, higher management needs to find ways how field staffs can be given ownership to decisions taken than imposing on them something that they do not feel worth doing or be possible to achieve by them maintaining quality of the services. A culture of shared leadership should be practiced in place of misusing organisational position.

► **Grooming field staffs on marketing, especially the front liners**

BEP needs to provide customised training to all its field level staffs on how to talk to the community, what to talk with them and how to deal with difficulties. This will help to develop a smart field operation team who will be the ultimate ambassador of BRAC at the end of the day. At the frontline, Programme Organisers (POs) execute all the plans/decisions taken by their managers at field and head office and thus increasing their capability should be stressed with due importance. Their immediate supervisors and senior officials are trying to groom them informally, but this activity should be a part of mainstream capacity building planning for BEP.

► **Increasing online activities**

When different BRAC programmes are trying to incorporate technologies with many of its traditional ways of operation, issues like collection of tuition fees, budget approval and so on in BEP is still operated manually. If those tasks can be done online, valuable working hours can be saved to be used for other activities.

► **Providing skills training to field staffs**

The current situation demands specialised training of staffs on different issues, like in-depth training on Early Childhood Development for staffs working with ECD component and ICT training for ADP staffs so that they can also disseminate skills learned to facilitator, peer leaders and as a whole the community. Other than component specific training, all the staffs should be provided training on 'Enterprise development and Social Mobilisation'. Those who already have experience running social enterprise should be hired as trainer of these trainings so that they bring and share problem solving techniques from their life.

► **Visible monitoring and follow-up**

Visibility of BEP staffs at centre/school needs to be increased so that community feels they are not only coming for tuition collections rather putting focus on quality of education, supervision of other staffs and so on. They need to spend more time to talk with communities and to get their feedback for further improvement of the capacities.

► **Clearly defining quality indicators**

A common definition of 'quality' in each component of BEP and a programme wide collective understanding of that is important to develop without further delay. Also, there should be clearly define indicator/s to measure quality of the services. Some adjustments, based on demand of the recipients/communities, with current contents of each components

should be considered another priority task to respond to the 'quality' idea they perceive.

► **Restructuring data management system**

BEP must work on to develop liable and well-synchronised data management system so that everybody involved with this programme have accurate information before hand while decision-making. A central data collection and analysis unit to support all components needs to function at expected level.

► **Informing government officials timely**

There should have dedicated time for field staffs to inform government officials regarding any changes with the operation of BEP and compliance of those with national polices and others. Keeping government informed at field level and resolving the issues in advance might facilitate smooth programme operation.

About

BRAC Research and Evaluation Division

The Research and Evaluation Division was established in 1975 as an independent unit within BRAC to provide research support to strengthen BRAC's multi-faceted development programmes. Although RED concentrates on BRAC programmes, its analytical work goes beyond and includes research on various development issues of national and global importance that contributes to evidence-based policy dialogue and discourse. For more information, please visit, research.brac.net

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