

Child Nutrition and Ethnicity - Need Large Scale Research and Drawing Attention of Donor Agency

Md Monoarul Haque¹ and Mst Mostary Zannath²

¹*MPhil in Public Health, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, Bangladesh*

²*Associate Professor, Department of Public Health, Atish Dipanker University of Science and Technology, Bangladesh*

***Corresponding Author:** Md Monoarul Haque, MPhil in Public Health, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, Bangladesh.

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Health is a basic requirement to improve the quality of life. Healthy individuals are a prerequisite for the increased production in agriculture, industry and also in every sphere of life. Children who are stunted, anemic, experience hunger or have poorer dietary intake tend to have frequent or chronic infections. We know malnutrition in 3 to 5 year of age will affect school performance during school age and there is more chance to drop out of school early and repeat grades. It is well established that the first three years of life are critical, and that the way a child's brain develops is greatly influenced by what s/he experiences during that period. Not only do environment affect how large and how fast a child's brain grow, but it helps direct the actual "wiring" of the brain's circuitry. Early period of life is a "critical window" for the promotion of optimal growth, health and behavioral development. Half of the children who die worldwide are related to mild and moderate degree of malnutrition but there is very scanty information about tribal children in Bangladesh. So reduction in morbidity and improvement of nutritional status are major policy issue for health planners in developing countries like Bangladesh. Bangladesh has a variety of tribal population reflecting its great ethnic diversity. They constitute about 1% of total population, though they are scattered all over the hilly and dense forest region of the country. There are 45 different tribal groups in Bangladesh with a total population of more than 12 lakh. So, as observed, their ethnic origin, culture, feeding practice, literacy rate and profession are different from those of indigenous Bengali people. We know in Bangladesh tribal population living in different ecosystem and depend on primitive agricultural practices; they often face uncertainty of food supply and tend to suffer from under nutrition. Various myths and faulty food habits are the important contributors for the wide prevalence of malnutrition among tribal population. There is very little information available regarding the diet and nutritional status of tribal children in Bangladesh.

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