

The Present Situation of Hearing-Impaired People in Bangladesh: Focus on the Isolation of Hearing-Impaired People in Rural Areas

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Place of fieldwork: Bangladesh

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Key Words: Bangladesh, People with disabilities, Hearing-impaired People, Deaf, Sign language, NGO

- Research background:

Although many people with disabilities live in Bangladesh, one of the poorest countries in Asia, only hearing-impaired people are unable to beg because they have no visible physical disabilities. The situation that they face with regard to basic survival is very serious as social security is overwhelmingly insufficient, unlike in developed countries such as Japan and Western Europe. In recent years, a new movement has emerged to support hearing-impaired people in Bangladesh, through the policies of the current administration and some NGO support. However, this does not constitute a comprehensive solution, because the most serious problem for the hearing-impaired is communication disorder and a lack of access to information.

- Research purpose and aim:

Through my research, I intend to shed light on the present situation of hearing-impaired people in Bangladesh. This research focuses on the problem of isolation in rural areas, from the point of view of not only policy and support but also communication theory and community theory.

- Results and achievements from fieldwork:

In this fieldwork, I visited two NGOs that support people with disabilities, five deaf schools, and ten hearing-impaired people's homes, in rural areas and cities. I used the research methods of participant observation and interviews. The contents of the survey included: How to locate and define hearing-impaired people, spread conditions of Bangladeshi sign language, and the situation of schools for the hearing-impaired. The survey also examined communication between family members of hearing-impaired persons, NGO efforts, hearing-impaired people's personalities, living situations, marriage, their environment, their relationships, and social issues. I observed the dissemination of Bangladeshi sign language by NGO activities, situations that are unique to Bangladeshi deaf education, and hearing-impaired people's use of communication. The most significant achievement is that I could see and feel the isolation of hearing-impaired people in rural areas, especially those who could not use sign language or do not go to schools for the hearing-impaired.

- Implications for and directions on future research:

I have to analyze the data obtained once again and further the literature review. I want to study the isolation of hearing-impaired people in Bangladesh, from a variety of perspectives and consider a complete

solution to their problems in the future.



Picture 1. NGO staff teaches Bangladeshi sign language to teachers at a regular school for 5 days



Picture 2. With students of deaf schools in rural areas



Picture 3. Bangladeshi sign language is based on British Sign Language (BSL). But, people use variety of signs that do not belong to BSL. In representing the alphabet A ~ Z, BSL uses both hands, but American Sign Language (ASL) uses only one hand. Mr. Dipu does not send emails to friends (hearing-impaired people), but exchanges videos using a mobile phone. According to him, at that time, ASL was more convenient than BSL because he held his phone with one hand and could use sign language with the other hand.



Picture 4. A girl (hearing-impaired person) talks to her brother and sister (normally hearing people) with local sign language.