

Survival Patterns of Deserted Women in Bangladesh

Neaz Ahmed

Department of Social Work, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Sylhet-3114, Bangladesh

Copyright©2018 by authors, all rights reserved. Authors agree that this article remains permanently open access under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International License

Abstract This paper focuses on survival patterns of deserted women in Sylhet City of Bangladesh. It is based on a study with 10(ten) deserted women by using an in-depth interview guide and tape recorder. Even more than other women in Bangladesh, deserted women are an extremely disadvantaged group. They have to play roles as mothers and simultaneously as wage earners to support themselves and their children. They are vulnerable, not only socially but also economically, in comparison to other categories of women. They experience multiple serious, financial problems which compel them to lead a vulnerable livelihood. This paper is based on an empirical study conducted in Sylhet city. The findings of the study, in all likelihood, affect the real picture of survival patterns of deserted women and will provide a platform for developing recommendations for policy reform or adopting new policies. It may also help government and other human development organizations to adopt effective strategies to meet the growing challenges and urgent needs of this vulnerable segment of women and their overall development.

Keywords Survival, Desertion, Women, Hardship

1. Introduction

Desertion profoundly affects the financial, emotional, physical, and social conditions of South Asian women. Among them, the situation of Bangladeshi women is comparatively a dire one, Mannan, [1]. Our patriarchal culture and social traditions confine most women within the home. From birth to death, they depend on the male breadwinner for economic matters. In that sense, the majority of women are unskilled and unemployed, whereas in developed countries most women are working women and the absence of husband does not always create economic havoc in life, only psychological suffering. But in a developing country like Bangladesh, the absence of a male breadwinner has serious consequences for a woman and her children, exposing them to economic hardship and insecurity. They experience multiple problems in the

social arena. The absence of a husband drives a woman to seek employment outside the home for earning money to maintain her family. Because women are unskilled, they continuously struggle to meet their endless wants with only labor power. Unfortunately, they have to work as either domestic servants or cleaners for very low wages. Others are predominantly engaged in a variety of informal sector occupations, as unskilled workers in garments factories, in the construction sector, or in prostitution and begging, Naripokkho [2]. As a result, the majority of women experience serious financial problems, and many of them are unable to provide food, clothing, and shelter for themselves and their children, Kumari [3].

Deserted women are considered to be the poorest of the poor. They have hardly anyone to provide economic support to their families compared to a family where husband or any other financial support providers remain. They have to maintain the whole cost of the family which compels them to hard labor. Hossain and Huda [4] have identified the problems of women-headed households to be financial insecurity, physical insecurity, societal negative reaction, etc. Mathew [5] in a study on “Problems in Women-headed Households resulting from desertion with a view to examine socio-economic characteristics of deserted women” explored the reasons for desertion to find out the problems faced by them and the social support available to them. This exploratory study was conducted on fifty-six women-headed households in the city of Hyderabad. The study reveals that the major causes of desertion are diverse and include the husband’s inability to financially support the family, alcoholism, the husband’s illegal relations, his mental illness, and inability of the woman’s family to satisfy dowry demands. The women suffer from various emotional disturbances, i.e., feelings of trauma, feelings of emptiness and loneliness, feelings of fear, uncertainty, and insecurity, and intense suicidal tendencies. Almost all of them feel that the deep psychological scar would remain forever, and hold themselves solely responsible for their condition. A large number of respondents were sole-earner households. Habib [6] explored that the absence of a male breadwinner and the lack of tangible resources led to a situation of increased vulnerability for

the female heads of households that, in turn, affected socio-psychological status of the female heads adversely.

Marital instability is an issue of widespread concern among women in the slum area. Jesmin and Salway [7] described the patterns of marriage and in particular the rising incidence of marital instability among the bustee (slum) population of Dhaka by using qualitative and quantitative data from the Urban Livelihoods Study (ULS). The changing nature of the bustee reduced social sanctions in marriage, dysfunction of the clan, weaker familial ties, and increased options for labour force participation are giving greater freedom to women compared with their rural counterparts. Marital discord, insecurity and instability are high and yet marriage remains a necessity. The unstable nature of bustee life, harassment from men, social and economic dependency, the difficulty of returning to the village, and absence of strong kin networks force women to marry. In many cases, migrant men start new families elsewhere, creating a new set of obligation and undercutting economic support to their first family. Bruce [8]. Islam [9] researched the "Allowance Scheme for Widowed and Husband-deserted Distressed Women" program using a qualitative approach. Data was collected through an interview schedule and a check list for Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and with the help of a semi-structured questionnaire from two groups of respondents: the beneficiaries and the non-beneficiaries. He found that husband-deserted women are struggling hard to continue their livelihood because of their miserable economic condition, their inability to work, limited access to formal labor market and the general attitude of society. As a social safety net program, the "Allowance Scheme for Widowed and Husband-deserted Distressed Women" is an admirable attempt of the government to improve the living conditions of this disadvantage group by delivering cash support. Islam found that this scheme has an important impact on the lives of rural distressed widowed and husband-deserted women, particularly in reducing food insecurity, managing better clothing, and medical care. By achieving these basic needs, they earn some degree of dignity and honor within family and society.

The literature reviewed above confirms that deserted women are a disadvantaged group in Bangladesh. Although there are no concrete statistics, it is safe to conclude that each year in our country; a great number of women are deserted by their husbands. Various causes are responsible: the faulty process of marriage, poverty, inability to provide family support, extra marital relationship, and anonymity, lack importance of marriage registration, unemployment, unpaid dowry demand and drug use, etc. www.bookdepository.com [10]. Desertion has adverse consequences for women and their dependent children. In order to find out the survival ways of deserted women, this study was conducted in Sylhet City of Bangladesh.

2. Methods and Materials

The aim of this study is to understand the survival pattern of deserted women in the city of Sylhet in Bangladesh. Total population of Sylhet City is 270606. Among them, the population of male is 142320 and female is 128286 (Banglapedia, 2011). The case study method is applied in this study in which the researcher explores the struggles and survival patterns of deserted women. As there is no database available of deserted women in Sylhet City, the researcher visited different areas of the city and found a larger concentration of deserted women in Latif's slum situated at Mojumder Para in Ward No. 20 under Sylhet City Corporation. Consequently, Latif's slum was purposively selected for this study. All the deserted women living in the selected slum make up the universe of the study. Among them, ten (10) deserted women were purposively chosen as they were willing to share and articulate reliable data in detail. An in-depth interview guide has been used as an instrument for data collection. The interview sessions have been recorded in an audio recorder. A diary has also been maintained by the researcher to take short notes while discussing various issues with the respondents. More than one interview session was arranged for each respondent. Throughout the analysis, the researcher has attempted to gain a deeper understanding of what has been studied and the interpretation of data has been continually refined. By trying to understand and grasp the deeper meaning of the data with a focus on the objectives of the study and research questions, analysis and interpretation was made in a descriptive manner that reflects the actual picture of survival patterns of deserted women.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Background of Deserted Women

The study reveals that most of the deserted women grew up in landless and wage-earner families. Economic vulnerability of their natal family compelled them to engage in child labor from early childhood rather than go to school or continue their studies. Besides economic vulnerability of parents, unconsciousness about the importance of education also played a significant role in their low education level. A hurried marriage without enough information about the groom and his family was the most common picture among these women. Registration is the most essential aspect of a Muslim marriage because it clearly shows the husband's maintenance obligation toward the wife and legally binds him to the responsibility for his wife. But marriage registration was not found among deserted women. Unconsciousness of rights and low education level of their guardians as well as informal marriage and early marriage

are the most prominent factors in this regard. Dowry was a major issue that influenced their marriage. In their conjugal life, most of the women were unhappy. Almost all of them were beaten by their husbands. Despite being aware of the husband's extramarital relationship, having to tolerate torture for dowry, or receiving inadequate maintenance support from the husband, these women could not protest due to fear of conflict and disruption of marriage. They always tried to maintain good relationships with their husbands. Extramarital relationship of the husband was the most common scenario of the desertion cases. Five out of ten respondents claimed that they were deserted by their husband due to his extramarital affairs with other women. Another dominating issue related to desertion was the demand for dowry by the groom. When the wife's family was unable to continuously fulfill the economic demands of the groom, it resulted in his torturing the wife and leaving home without giving any financial support for wife and children. Drug addiction of husband and polygamy were also leading factors of desertion. The stories of the deserted women reveal how they were abandoned by their husbands and forced to bear the entire responsibility for their families.

3.2. Economic Condition and Nature of Employment

Families maintained by women are most vulnerable in our country as most of the women in Bangladesh are not working women. Among them, life is particularly harsh for women who are deserted by their husbands. They are neither widowed nor divorced—they are wives but without husbands. Their changed status increases their vulnerability as they get less sympathy and help from society compared to a widow and they cannot establish the right to get dower money from husband since they are not divorced. In the absence of their husbands, they are forced to shoulder the economic responsibility of the family and at the same time continue to do household work and look after children and other dependent family members. This double burden of family and lack of economic resources creates pressure on them and compels them to go outside the home to earn a livelihood. Almost all the deserted women who live in urban slum area engage in different kinds of earning activities. But due to lack of enough industries in Sylhet City, employment opportunities are very inadequate. Besides, their low level of education and lack of training limits their employment options. They usually did not get into competitive formal sectors of employment. As a result, they had to work in informal sectors in which remuneration is low.

Most of the women work as maids in houses, messes of students, or other available employment. In addition, a woman can work more than one house as a part timer. They are paid monthly and their salary is fixed on the basis of number and types of work. Usually they had to wash clothes, clean bathrooms, mop floors and wash kitchen

utensils, and sometimes help in cooking. The general pattern of housemaid women work 1-2 hours in a house. They return to do their household chores and then got to another house and thus work more than two or three houses. Sometimes after working in one house they directly move to another house. However, working as a maidservant in other's house is not considered a prestigious job and women try to avoid this job. Therefore, another livelihood strategy of deserted women in Sylhet City is to work in restaurant or community centre as a cooking helper. They are paid daily but work as contractual employees and usually have to prepare vegetable, meat, fish, spices, etc., for cooking. They work from morning to evening or the whole night. Generally women always want to avoid labor exhaustive or high risk jobs but some of the respondents were found obligatorily working as day laborers in construction or other unorganized sectors, especially those who didn't find any alternative reasonable job. One deserted woman opined in this regard,

Deserted Woman 08: After desertion of my husband, when I came to Sylhet, I visited door-to-door to find any work. But as my child was two months old, no one agreed to employ me. At last, the beggar woman who took me in had contacts with a contractor and managed work for me as a day laborer. It was very hard for me to continue this work but I had no alternative way of survival.

All the respondent women who worked as day laborers had to work more than nine hours in a day without sufficient rest. They were given only a few minutes for having a meal. A skill-based job is always preferable to all as it brings prestige and better remuneration but needs less physical endeavor. But skill and training in any specialized sector is very rare among deserted women in slum area. Out of ten participants, only one woman was found working in a tailoring house and was paid a monthly salary on the basis of production quantity. She acquired this skill from one of her relatives.

3.3. Nature of Alternative Employment

In urban areas, the cost of living is much higher than rural areas and that's why a higher cash income is needed in slum households than in rural households for survival. Therefore, economic hardship is most profound among deserted women living in the urban slum area. They frequently fail to meet their consumption cost with only their job. As a survival strategy, they always try to invest as many family members as possible to earn a livelihood. As a result, they forcibly send their children to work before they reach the legal age (18 years) of employment. This is reflected in the following statement,

Deserted Woman 01: When my husband left me, I went to my parents' house. As my brother was reluctant to take my responsibility, my father made for me a small house

he could afford besides their house I then started to work in a nearby home. But I could not manage my family with my little income. My elder son was eight years old. I contacted with a vegetable seller living in our village and made him agree to take my son as his helper. After six months, I came to Sylhet with my son and from that time he started to work as a shop assistant to support me.

Another alternative strategy adopted by deserted women is taking loans from the formal and informal sectors to cover the gap between income and expenditure. It is found that a small number of such *loanee* women, who have the skill and opportunity, spend this credit money to start or continue small businesses like selling home-made cakes on the roadside, selling dry fish and clothes from their home and sometimes going door to door; but others spend the borrowed money for current consumption or for repaying previous loans. The women who live jointly in parental homes mostly give this money to their fathers or brothers to invest in new or existing income generation activities. One respondent explained,

Deserted Woman 06: I received Tk.10,000 from BRAC, a leading NGO in Bangladesh. My father bought a cow with this money and the rest was used for family expenditure. I always think I should do something for myself to earn, like rearing a domestic animal (i.e., a cow or goat) but I have no scope for it.

Besides institutional credit, in an emergency situation, a majority of the women receive loans from non-institutional sectors like professional money lenders as there is no complexity of official procedure. But they have to pay a high rate of interest. It is evident that all of them want to improve their miserable economic condition through part-time self-employment apart from their regular jobs, but their opportunities are limited due to lack of capital, training, and less scope for farming activities. Consequently, they cannot improve their living standards and progress beyond their economic crises.

3.4. Level of Income

The amount of income usually varies from case to case based on their employment pattern. The women who work as household maids earn from Tk. 1500 to Tk. 2100 per month. On the other hand, the monthly income of a day laborers is not easily understood because their work is mainly seasonal in nature. However, each working day they can earn from Tk. 150 to Tk. 200. The income of other women is also irregular and unfixed in nature and their monthly income is not more than Tk. 3500. A deserted women working as a tailor who earns comparatively better said,

Deserted Woman 10: I have no fixed salary. I am given Tk. 40 per dress. Usually I can stitch more than three dresses in a day and thus I can earn more than Tk.3000 per month.

In some cases, their income is supplemented by their children or through self-employment. But these earnings are not sufficient to achieve a reasonable minimum standard of living. The women who are living jointly with parental families very often have to give up their total income in exchange for shelter and consumption.

3.5. Employment Vulnerability and Reasons for Choice

Deserted women living in the urban slum area are always struggling for survival. They work mostly in unorganized working sectors in which jobs are temporary or less permanent, and they often have to change their jobs because they face different complex situations. Sometimes they willingly engage in such jobs and sometimes they are compelled to do so. The experience of deserted women evidently reflects their employment vulnerability. The nature and intensity of their vulnerability varies from one occupation to another. Wage exploitation is a common problem experienced by all deserted women. It is more acute for the women who work as household maids. They are very poorly paid—all the respondents earn less than Tk. 2500 per month which is not sufficient for survival. Thus, they have to work in more than one place. The majority of housemaids claimed that they always feel low dignity in the workplace. Their employers and other family members, including younger children, always assert authority over them. They have to put up with verbal torture if they make even minor mistakes in their work. Even worse, a few women revealed that they are often suspected if anything is stolen from their employers' homes and have to shoulder the liability for the theft. One respondent expressed her terrible experience as,

Deserted Woman 05: I had been working in a house near my slum. Last month I took leave for three days to see my sick mother. In this duration, a gold ornament was stolen from my master's home. When I returned and went for work, they charged me for their stolen ornament. I was at wits' end as I knew nothing about this. I cried and tried to prove that I was guiltless but nobody heard my speech. At last, they confined me within their house and complained to some powerful people in the locality. However, with the help of some of my neighbors, I was freed from there—but I lost my job. Now I am working in another house situated in the same area.

They are tortured not only by their employer's family members but also by guests. In spite of their dissatisfaction, most deserted women don't prefer to shift to other occupations because a housemaid's job involves less labor and extra benefits like Eid bonus (Muslim festivals), financial aid in emergency, help in sickness for treatment services, help for daughter's marriage, receiving leftover food, or in the hope of gaining better employment for their children. Moreover, the unavailability of other suitable job option seen geographic proximity to their home is a

significant influence in this choice of job. The women who work as a day laborers find a comparatively better daily wage rate than as a monthly-paid part-time housemaid. But they can't find work round the year. Therefore, a regular income source is a common problem for deserted women. They find it difficult to maintain their families during a shortage of work especially during the rainy season. This forces them to seek alternative livelihood strategies and frequently places them at risk of economic hardship. They can't get any extra benefit from employers; instead, they frequently face verbal and sometimes sexual abuse by employers or coworkers. All respondents stated that they have experienced abuse in slang language by coworkers, particularly when they work slowly.

Added to such problems, deserted women suffer from wage discrimination. Respondents who were day laborers said that they are always given at least Tk. 50 less than their male fellows; the reasoning is that they are physically weaker than the male counterparts and therefore they are unable to work as much as male workers. As because finding the job is an urgent need, the women never bargain. One respondent lamented,

Deserted Woman 08: I always suffer difficulties in the workplace. Every day I struggle to find a job. Some employers do not want to hire me and always prefer a male worker. But others who employed me give lesser wages than other male workers. In spite of this, I had to continue this job as I had no alternative work in this city. I can keep my little baby with me which is not allowed in other jobs. Sometimes I think of engaging in self-employment but I have no capability to do this.

The employment options for the deserted women are very limited in Sylhet City. Moreover these women are not skilled enough to engage in any good jobs. Garments and other factories are not widespread in Sylhet city where for women higher educational qualifications are not required. In order to not getting alternatives, they would have to work in different community centres or restaurants where they face both sexual abuse and financial insecurity. Hence, despite employment vulnerabilities, they continue to work as servants in other's houses and engage in a laborious occupation to earn comparatively better daily wage in the absence of better alternative jobs. They are compelled by economic hardship to stay in their existing jobs even though a few women are very conscious about their prestige and don't want to work as a day laborers or household maids.

3.6. Food Consumption Pattern

The deserted women living in the urban slum area belong to a desperately poor economic group whose monthly income ranges between Tk.1500 and Tk. 3500. It is barely enough to purchase proper food for sufficient calorie intake after meeting other basic necessities, given

currently high market prices. None of them can afford to consume their desired food every day. They want to eat meat, milk, big fish, egg, fruit, etc. But these are very expensive and they avoid such items due to their low earning power. They usually purchase less expensive food like rice, vegetables, dry fish, small fish, etc., for survival. This situation is expressed in the following comment,

Deserted Woman 03: I earn Tk.2100 per month. My elder daughter who works as a domestic worker also earns Tk.700. It is impossible for me to buy good food for my six-member family after paying Tk. 900 as house rent. My children want to eat meat and big fish. It is very painful that I am unable to feed them big fish for the last six months and can't remember when I bought meat after being deserted. But I collect some meat from rich people in every 'Eid-ul-Azha' (Muslim religious festival) which make my children cheerful.

The same situation is illustrated by another respondent who said,

Deserted Woman 05: I am poor and good food is only our dream. I can't buy quality food with my little income. I usually buy vegetables from vegetable sellers who ferry (peddle) from door to door. Sometimes, may be once a month, I buy small fish from such vendors or from the nearby bazaar in the evening as the prices go down a little bit at that time but the fish are not good.

Not only do they suffer from lack of quality food, they frequently suffer from inadequate quantity of food. When they can manage money, they eat three times a day but when they face economic crises, they can afford to eat only twice a day. In a crisis, the most common strategy adopted by them is to depend on donated food or to reduce both quality and quantity of food. Most of the women asserted that they eat twice a day when they face economic difficulty, as voiced by a day-laborer deserted woman,

Deserted Woman 07: I don't think of my future but I always think of managing every-day meals for my children. As I am a day laborer, I cannot earn regularly. I pass some days with pleasure when I find work. But the rest of the days, due to lack of employment, I face financial difficulty and I cannot manage meals thrice a day. In that crisis, I have to seek help from other people's charity. If I fail to find this, I purchase some food from the nearest shop on credit.

The shortage of food is usually more acute for deserted women who do not have any back-up family support. It is very hard for them to manage a meal three times in a day and often they have to go without a meal. A domestic-worker deserted woman expressed her situation in tears,

Deserted Woman 09: I live with my five children but I am the only earning member. I always face hardship in managing basic food for my family. Often, I feed my

children only small dry fish chatni with rice as a routine meal. Sometimes, I have to go without any food. I feel very sad when I can't provide three meals a day to my children. Every day they wait for me: When will I come home? And if I bring leftover food from my employer's home, they become very cheerful.

3.7. Housing Quality

The housing quality of poor deserted women is most vulnerable. All of them, whether living separately or with parental family, face tenure difficulty. Inadequate resources and lack of money force them to live in cheap rented single rooms in the slum area. Such accommodation is poorly constructed with bamboo, tin, etc., which is soaked through in the rainy season and chilly during winter nights. During heavy rainfall, the rooms leak water which makes their life difficult and also badly affects their earnings. This illustrated by one respondent as,

Deserted Woman 05: We face harsh problems on rainy days. Our slum situated on the bank of a canal due to which rainfall heavily affects our slum and water quickly comes inside our house which makes it unsuitable for habitation. I keep my children on the bed until the water recedes. Every year, we face this problem. Frequently, I can't go outside for work and I even have to stop cooking as our cooking place is under water. But my children cry for food—that's why last rainy season I made a temporary chula (cooking hearth) with soil through which I cook food on my bed during heavy rainfall. I want to change my accommodation to a comparatively better place, but these need more money—which is not possible for me.

3.8. Family Support

Desertion always places the women in an utterly helpless position. The increasing trend of nuclear family and faulty process of marriage expose these women to greater vulnerability. After abandonment by the husband, they face economic and social insecurity due to lack of adequate male support. They find it is difficult to continue to survive through their own effort alone, and hence support from other family members becomes an urgent need for them. It is found that most of them had no contact with their family, and therefore they ultimately seek help from their parental family. The level of support available varies based on their living arrangement. Deserted women who live in extended families find more moral and financial support from other family members than those who live separately with their children. Among the ten respondents, three were found to live with their parental family and said that they feel more secure since they started to live in the extended family. However, this scenario is different in case of women living separately. As they are the main wage-earners of the family and take on all responsibilities

of the family, they found it necessary to engage their children in the workforce to support the family. But this too is insufficient because they have fewer earning children and the children's earning capacity is lower.

3.9. Social Support

Social networks play a significant role in helping deserted women adapt to their distressed circumstances. Although people view them negatively and hence show less sympathy toward them than toward other categories of destitute women, yet some of their relatives and neighbors are very supportive and provide material and mental support. When the deserted women face any painful experience, they can share their problems with such people. It helps them to release their feelings of hurt and to turn a new leaf in their lives. Not only do they receive moral support, most of the respondents said that their neighbors and relatives help them to seek employment and sometimes lend money in emergency situations without any interest—all of which lead them to maintain both kin and non-kin based social networks. In most cases, it was seen that after desertion they shift their habitation and start to live near their relatives or others with whom they have good relations.

Deserted Woman 05: When my husband refused to live with me, I became confused thinking of how I would survive. At that time, one of my relatives took me in to this slum and managed a shelter for me. His wife also often helps me to seek a job. Not only this, in case of emergency, I can borrow money from them without any conditions. I always remain grateful to them.

3.10. Access to Social Services and Constraints

Access to social services is very nominal for deserted women. It is clearly evident that they are hindered by lack of knowledge about the availability of the existing service system. Besides, a majority of them claim that due to the absence of a male guardian, they do not have good networking with local political officials and other powerful persons, and as a result, they can't find any government help. This is illustrated by one of the respondents, who commented,

Deserted women 02: We see the political leaders only when election comes. They start to come into each of our houses, ask for votes, and promise to improve our condition. But after election is over we never see them. In reality, they help those who can flatter and maintain relations with them.

Their access to existing social services is further restricted by the indifference and political bias of selection committees which results in wrong selection of beneficiaries. As a result, economically better off women are given importance while actually vulnerable deserted

women are left out. However, some nongovernment social services play an important role in their lives like education for working children, microcredit, etc., but they face constraints while accessing such services. They have to show income generating activities to receive microcredit and follow an official procedure both of which sometimes hinder their accessibility to the credit market. Besides, they are afraid of taking loans due to the burden of weekly repayment.

4. Policy Recommendations

On the basis of findings, some policy can be recommended in order to make deserted women's life more easy and comfortable.

- i. Provide financing support for completely dependent deserted women so that they can lead a good life in a society.
- ii. Provide shelter for homeless deserted women with enough facilities.
- iii. Arrange and introduce vocational training and rehabilitation program for them with the aim of self-employment.
- iv. Deserted women can every right to get legal assistance from the state.
- v. All deserted women should be under the coverage of Allowance given by Government.
- vi. Deserted women should be given social support from the in-laws. In case of that legal measures can be introduce in order to give them better life.

5. Conclusions

Deserted women in Bangladesh are placed in a deplorable condition and experience multifarious problems in their struggle to survive. Development projects frequently focus on destitute women and target them for programs but this segment of destitute women continues to exist in a miserable condition as their vulnerabilities are taken into less consideration by both the government and larger society. It goes without saying that desertion imposes particular challenges and disadvantages for the women as they are highly impoverished with very little or no access to both familial property and social service schemes. Moreover, diversification of their employment options place their economic condition in utter impoverishment as they have to meet the whole demands of their larger family. As a result, there is very low possibility of meeting their basic needs and it is a severe hardship to bring up their children. Societal stereotypical belief and bias against deserted women make their struggle difficult. They are always deprived and exploited both

within family and society. So, there is a need to adopt effective policies, strategies, programs, and action plans to ensure a suitable environment for them and improve their living standard. Finally, it can be said that the suggestions proposed in this paper would need continuing and concerted effort from all concerned. This is possible only through joint venture at different levels with special attention to different policy initiatives focusing on the problems and specific needs of deserted women. All efforts remain immaterial unless deserted women themselves become the agents of change. So, it would be a much wider and successful effort when deserted women make their voice heard and are represented in decision making for their betterment. Finally there is a need of social action from every responsible person in the society state for their better life, better environment in their living place and attitudinal change towards them.

REFERENCES

- [1] Mannan, M. A. 2000. "Female-Headed Households in Rural Bangladesh: Strategies for Well-being and Survival." CPD-UNFPA Publication Series. Dhaka: Centre for Policy Dialogue.
- [2] Naripokkho. 1991. Violence in the slums of Dhaka city. Dhaka: Naripokkho.
- [3] Kumari, R. 1989. Women-Headed Households in Rural India. New Delhi: Radiant Publishing.
- [4] Hossain, N. and Huda, S. 1995. "Problems of the Women Headed Households." Working paper (BRAC-ICDDR,B Joint Research Project), no. 9. Dhaka: BRAC-ICDDR, B Joint Research Project.
- [5] Mathew, Anna. 1998. "Problems in women-headed households resulting from desertion." Roda Mistry College of Social Work and Research Centre, Hyderabad
- [6] Habib T. Z (2010) Socio-Psychological Status of female Heads of Household in Rajshahi City, Bangladesh. Anteroom Online Journal of Anthropology, 6(2), 173-186
- [7] Jesmin, Sonia, and Salway, Sarah. 2000. "Marriage among the Urban Poor of Dhaka: Instability and Uncertainty." Journal of International Development 12 (5): 689-705.
- [8] Bruce, J (1995) Families in Force: New Perspective on Mothers, Fathers and Children. New York, The Population Council.
- [9] Islam, K. M. Kabirul. 2007. "Poverty Reduction in Bangladesh: A qualitative analysis of the 'Allowance Scheme for Widowed and Husband-Deserted Distressed Women.'" Master's thesis. Bodo University College, Bodo, Norway.
- [10] <https://www.bookdepository.com/Poverty-Vulnerability-Dhaka-Slums-Dr-Jane-Pryer/9780754618645>