

Socio – economic Development Project for poor Slum Women

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

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"Empowering Progress, Delivering Impact"



Supported Partner



**Microkrediet voor Moeders,
The Netherlands**

Implemented by:

Voluntary Association for Rural Development of Bangladesh

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Message from the Chairman



I am delighted to note that VARD of Bangladesh is publishing its 2024 Annual Report, showcasing key achievements and successes from January to December 2024. This initiative is commendable, and I deeply appreciate the organization's efforts in highlighting its impactful work.

Since its establishment in 2006, VARD has tirelessly worked to uplift the lives of the most vulnerable and underprivileged communities in its operational areas. Through diverse programs in health, education, family development, and spiritual and moral growth, VARD has made significant strides in improving livelihoods. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the dedicated team and esteemed executive members for their unwavering commitment to serving these communities.

I also take this opportunity to thank the government officials, NGO partners, local leaders, community volunteers, family development group members, and residents for their invaluable cooperation and support in implementing VARD's programs. Your collaboration has been instrumental in our success.

Finally, I express my profound appreciation to the MvM Donors from the Netherlands, including their staff and executive board, for their generosity and compassion in sharing resources with the most vulnerable individuals we serve.

As we move forward, I wish VARD continued success and prosperity in its noble mission.

With best regards,

Rev. Binoy Saur

Chairman, VARD of Bangladesh

Message From the Executive Director



In 2002, in a small town in Gopalganj, VARD of Bangladesh embarked on a vision: a society free from caste, class, and gender inequality, working tirelessly with the most vulnerable communities. What began as a humble hope has, over 22 years, transformed into a living reality—by the grace of God and the unwavering support of our esteemed MvM donors.

This journey has been a collective effort, driven by thousands of people from deprived communities, alongside our Executive Board, staff, volunteers, Self-Help Group leaders, donors, and well-wishers. Together, we have worked to empower disadvantaged women, equipping them with tools to overcome social, educational, environmental, health, economic, and cultural barriers. Today, VARD operates six interconnected programs, rooted in a rights-based approach, fostering grassroots change and social justice.

Our uniqueness lies in our steadfast commitment to uplifting marginalized groups—rural poor, women, children, youth, and those sidelined by caste and patriarchy. Through community-driven institutions and networks, we enable individuals to unlock their potential, foster alternative leadership, and engage in collective action toward a poverty-free society.

I extend my deepest gratitude to our development partners for their financial and technical support, which has fueled our mission since inception. Their encouragement inspires us to continue advocating for the rights of Bangladesh's most vulnerable, ensuring access to basic entitlements and meaningful participation in development.

Above all, I thank Almighty God for His blessings and wisdom, guiding us in this service to humanity. My heartfelt appreciation goes to our MvM donors, colleagues, and Executive Board for their trust and dedication, enabling me to contribute to this noble cause.

As we move forward, VARD remains committed to building an equitable society where every individual thrives.

With gratitude,

Jagodish Karmokar

Executive Director, VARD of Bangladesh

Background of the Organization:

The Voluntary Association for Rural Development (VARD) was founded in 2006 by Mr. Jagodish Karmokar, a former World Vision of Bangladesh employee, alongside a group of committed philanthropists. As a non-profit, non-political humanitarian organization, VARD is dedicated to fostering holistic development for marginalized communities across rural and urban Bangladesh.

VARD is committed to enhancing the welfare of children, women, youth, and families, focusing its efforts on uplifting the most disadvantaged. Through a holistic approach, it addresses the diverse challenges faced by the Bahari slum community in Mirpur, Dhaka, aiming to deliver sustainable, transformative change.

Through targeted initiatives in the Bahari slum, VARD empowers individuals and communities by providing access to education, healthcare, livelihoods, and essential resources. By promoting cooperation and inclusivity, it builds resilience and drives positive change, contributing to the broader well-being of society.

Guided by compassion and duty, VARD acts as a catalyst for positive change, reflecting empathy, integrity, and solidarity in its mission to create a brighter future for all.

Fueled by compassion and duty, VARD inspires hope, and drives change for women in the Bahari slum community, reflecting empathy, integrity, and solidarity in its mission to shape a brighter future for all.

Geographical Area of the Project

The project area, where VARD and MvM collaboratively serve the vulnerable Bahari slum community, spans Mirpur 11 and 12 under Pallabi Thana in Dhaka District, Bangladesh. This densely populated urban enclave is home to the Bihari community, who migrated from India during the partition with hopes of resettlement in Pakistan after Bangladesh's independence. Logistical challenges, however, confined them to cramped slums, a situation worsened by their alignment with Pakistani forces during the 1971 war, leading to marginalization by local Bangladeshis.

Today, these families—typically 5-7 members per household—live in overcrowded, single-room dwellings on government-assigned land, managing all daily activities within limited space. Dilapidated housing, built years ago, compounds their struggles, while inadequate infrastructure, including poor sewerage, limited clean water, and sanitation, deepens their socio-economic hardship. Financial constraints further restrict access to better housing or improvements.

This marginalized community faces historical legacies and ongoing disparities. VARD's efforts aim to address these challenges, enhancing living conditions and fostering inclusive development within Dhaka's urban landscape.



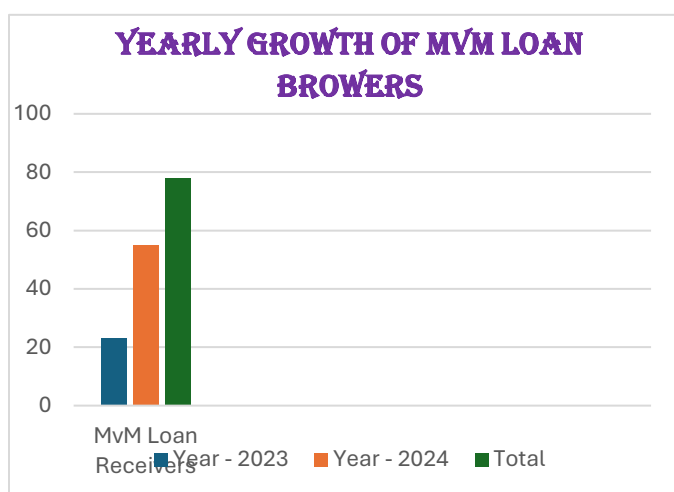
Summary of the Project:

The **Socio-Economic Development Project for Poor Slum Women**, supported by **MVM** and implemented by **VARD** in Bangladesh, has been a transformative initiative for the women of **Bahari Slum, Mirpur, Dhaka**. This project is dedicated to empowering the most vulnerable women by enhancing their **entrepreneurial skills** through **financial assistance and skill development training**.

Project Impact and Objectives

The primary objective of this initiative is to uplift marginalized women, enabling them to lead lives marked by **dignity, equality, and economic independence**, while also strengthening their influence in family and community decision-making. Through active participation in **small business ventures**, many women have significantly improved their families' well-being, particularly benefiting their children.

By fostering **economic self-sufficiency** and enhancing women's influence within their households and communities, the project has played a pivotal role in **advancing women's empowerment** in Bahari Slum.



Key Achievements (January 1 – December 31, 2024)

- **Financial Support and Loan Assistance:**
 - **79 Self-Help Women Group members** (out of a total of **555** members) received **MVM loan assistance**, representing **14.23%** of the group.
 - A revolving loan pool of **BDT 19,60,000.00** directly benefited **351 family members** by increasing household incomes.
 - **476 slum group members** are still awaiting **MVM support and funding**.
- **Improving Children's Education:**
 - **81 Self-Help Women Development Group members' children** have directly benefited from the initiative.
 - Out of **119 children**, **68.06%** are now attending school regularly, significantly improving access to education within these families.

- **Employment and Income Growth:**

- **37 women received new loans** from **VARD of Bangladesh**, financially supported by **MVM**.
- As a result, many families saw an **increase in monthly income from BDT 7,000.00 to BDT 9,000.00**.
- The project indirectly benefited **53 community members** by generating **new employment opportunities**, further contributing to the socio-economic upliftment of Bahari Slum.

Challenges and Barriers

Despite these achievements, **unstable national economic conditions** have posed significant challenges to small business growth. Many group members have struggled to **expand their businesses effectively**, limiting their potential for increased income. Addressing these barriers remains a key priority for ensuring **sustainable progress**.

Broader Social Impact

The additional income generated has significantly improved **children's education, access to nutritious food, and the ability to meet immediate family needs**. Beyond financial growth, the project has strengthened **familial and community bonds**, fostering **greater respect, honor, and dignity for women** within their households and the broader Bahari Slum community.

Gratitude and Future Aspirations

The **Bahari Slum Women Group Leaders** express their heartfelt gratitude for the collaborative efforts of **MVM, VARD of Bangladesh, and the local community**, whose unwavering support has made these positive changes possible. Looking ahead, the project aims to **expand its reach and provide more financial assistance and training**, ensuring that more women can break the cycle of poverty and achieve **long-term socio-economic stability**.

Education:

Education is a universal right for all children, irrespective of their circumstances. The MvM Women Development Sector prioritizes access to quality education for underprivileged children, supporting the offspring of loan borrowers by linking business loans to educational opportunities.

To advance this goal, VARD has established an Early Childhood Education Center for children of Self-Help Women Development Group members in the Bahari slum. Previously, this community lacked facilities for children under six, leaving many without early education. This initiative marks a significant step toward addressing that gap.

In response to this critical need, VARD launched its first Early Childhood Education Center in 2024, enrolling 25 children of Self-Help Women Development Group members. The initiative has sparked enthusiasm and gratitude in the Bahari slum community, with parents welcoming access to quality pre-primary education as a foundation for their children's future.



Beyond benefiting the children, this effort enhances the standing of MvM and VARD in Mirpur, Dhaka. By delivering vital educational support, VARD fosters hope and empowerment among underprivileged families, paving the way for a brighter future for the next generation.

Training:

Executive summary

The "Skill Development Training on Group Management and Accounts for Slum Mothers," a three-day program, was designed to empower 25 Self-Help Women Development Group mothers in managing their groups effectively. The training aimed to strengthen their management and accounting skills, promoting sustainability, efficiency, and accountability while fostering leadership and economic growth for both groups and families.

Using a participatory approach, the program covered essential topics: group management, decision-making for income-generating activities, problem-solving, and the principles of successful group dynamics. It equipped participants with the knowledge and tools to excel in their roles through interactive methods.

The training featured multimedia presentations, discussions, and group exercises, supported by resources like whiteboards, VIP cards, and poster paper. Trainers encouraged active engagement, feedback, and idea-sharing, creating an immersive learning environment that enhanced comprehension and skill retention.

Training Objectives

The three-day Skill Development Training on Group Management and Accounts aimed to empower Self-Help Women Development Group leaders with practical, impactful skills. Our objectives were:

- **Leadership Empowerment:** Equip group leaders with essential tools and knowledge to manage their groups confidently and effectively.
- **System Mastery:** Deepen understanding of group management and accounting systems, enabling leaders to serve as models of operational excellence.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Enhance skills to identify and resolve group conflicts, strengthening leadership capabilities.
- **Networking and Decision-Making:** Develop effective communication, collaboration, and interpersonal skills to enable inclusive, transparent, and well-informed group decision-making.
- **Document Management:** Improve capacity to maintain group records efficiently, ensuring transparency and accountability.
- **Future Leadership:** Inspire and prepare members to become future leaders, deepening expertise in group management and accounts for community sustainability.

These objectives aimed to cultivate confident, skilled leaders capable of driving the success and longevity of their Self-Help Groups.

Development Group and Management Training

The training session on **Development Groups and Management** was led by **G.M. Khairul Islam**, a **Mainstreaming Expert from CReLIC, LGED**. Through an interactive and engaging approach, he provided participants with a comprehensive understanding of **Development Groups** and their effective management. To illustrate key concepts, he utilized dynamic tools such as **stories, games, VIP cards, and a whiteboard**, fostering an immersive learning experience.

Participants were introduced to various **development group models**, with a particular emphasis on **participatory approaches** that empower **women's groups**. To reinforce learning, they were divided into teams and assigned **practical tasks** related to **Development Group management**. Each group worked collaboratively, presented their findings, and engaged in discussions to deepen their understanding.



The second session, facilitated by **Mr. Jagodish Karmokar**, explored **global management styles**. Using **interactive methods** such as stories, games, and hands-on exercises, he demonstrated different **management models** and their relevance to **Development Group leadership**. The session emphasized **participatory management**, a strategy that enhances **sustainability and efficiency** within development initiatives.

The training concluded with a **Q&A session**, allowing participants to assess and consolidate their learning.

Reflection and Engagement

The second day of the training began with a **recap session**, where participants shared key insights from **Day 1**. This interactive exercise fostered **reflection, discussion, and knowledge reinforcement**, allowing participants to consolidate their learning and build on previous concepts.

To enhance engagement, participants actively **assessed each other's contributions**, provided **constructive feedback**, and awarded **marks based on participation**. This peer evaluation process not only encouraged accountability but also reinforced the value of **collaborative learning**.

The facilitator acknowledged and appreciated the participants' efforts, emphasizing the importance of **active participation and peer-driven learning**. By the end of the session, participants had gained **essential skills and knowledge** for effectively managing **Self-Help Women Development Groups**, equipping them with the tools needed to drive sustainable community initiatives.

Leadership and Group Dynamics: Leadership and Leadership Patterns in Community Development

Led by **G.M. Khairul Islam** from **CReLIC, LGED**, this session provided an in-depth exploration of **Leadership and Leadership Patterns in community development**. Designed to be highly **interactive and engaging**, it incorporated **games, discussions, and problem-solving exercises** to enhance participants' understanding of effective leadership.

Participants actively **shared their insights** on **leadership challenges**, fostering a collaborative learning environment. The trainer introduced **various leadership methods and styles**, equipping participants with practical approaches to address **real-world challenges** in community leadership.

By the end of the session, participants had gained **valuable strategies** to strengthen **group leadership**, ensuring they could apply their newly acquired knowledge to empower and guide their communities effectively.

Characteristics of Effective Development Group Leaders

Facilitated by **Tabatha Panna Khan**, this session emphasized the **crucial role of character in leadership**. Through thought-provoking discussions, participants explored how **strong moral character fosters sustainable group management**. The session highlighted key **leadership qualities** essential for **ethical, inspirational, and impactful leadership** in **Self-Help Women Development Groups**.

Roles and Responsibilities of Group Leaders

Led by **Shila Halder** from **World Challenge (CHE) International**, this session provided a **comprehensive understanding** of the **responsibilities of group leaders**. Using **case studies, group exercises, and interactive games**, participants gained **practical insights** into the depth and scope of leadership roles. This hands-on approach equipped them with the **skills and confidence** to effectively **manage and develop their groups**.

Leader and Group Member Relationships

Facilitated by **Jagodish Karmokar**, this highly interactive session focused on the **dynamics of leader-member relationships**. A key highlight was the **"leader relationship game,"** which provided a **practical illustration** of effective leadership dynamics. Through **group work and open discussions**, participants deepened their understanding of **teamwork, collaboration, and the essential connection between leaders and group members**.

Learning Outcomes

- **Empowered Leadership Skills** – Participants gained **valuable insights into leadership**, enhancing their ability to **lead, inspire, and guide** their groups effectively.
- **Comprehensive Role Awareness** – A deeper understanding of **leadership responsibilities** enabled participants to **fulfill their roles with confidence and efficiency**.

- **Leaders vs. Managers** – Participants distinguished between **leadership and management**, improving their **decision-making, strategic planning, and organizational effectiveness**.
- **Enhanced Interpersonal Skills** – Strengthened abilities to **build positive relationships** with group members, fostering **collaboration, harmony, and productivity**.

This training successfully **equipped participants with the skills, knowledge, and confidence** to excel as **leaders within their communities**, driving **growth, empowerment, and sustainability** in **Self-Help Women Development Groups**.

Development Group Accounts & Bookkeeping Process

Understanding Group Accounts & Bookkeeping

The session on **Different Types of Group Accounts & the Bookkeeping Process**, led by **G.M. Khairul Islam**, provided an in-depth and engaging overview of **Development Group Accounts** and the various **accounting books** used within **Self-Help Women Development Groups**.

Using **interactive activities, storytelling, games, and whiteboard demonstrations**, participants were introduced to the **fundamentals of bookkeeping and financial management**. The session highlighted the **critical importance of accurate record-keeping**, ensuring group **sustainability and transparency** while preventing conflicts that may arise due to **poor financial management**.

To enhance **practical understanding**, participants engaged in **group bookkeeping exercises**, where they tackled **accounting-related problem-solving tasks**. This **hands-on approach** encouraged **critical thinking, collaborative decision-making, and real-world financial problem-solving**, equipping participants with **practical strategies** for effective **group account management**.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the training, participants significantly improved their understanding of **group financial management**, achieving the following key outcomes:

Enhanced Passbook Writing Skills – Improved ability to **accurately record and manage financial transactions**, leading to **structured and transparent financial systems** within development groups.

Increased Capacity for Accounts Management – Equipped participants—particularly **group leaders**—with **essential accounting knowledge**, enabling them to **address financial challenges and ensure efficient financial oversight**.

Understanding Financial Conflicts & Solutions – Explored **common financial challenges** faced by development groups and introduced **effective bookkeeping solutions**, enabling participants to **proactively manage financial risks**.

Impact on the Training

The three-day training concluded with an **interactive reflection session**, where participants shared their **insights, experiences, and key takeaways**. This discussion provided an opportunity to:

Express Learning Experiences – Participants reflected on how the training enhanced their **financial knowledge and skills**.

Seek Clarifications – A **Q&A session** allowed participants to **address doubts and reinforce their understanding of group accounts management**.

Provide Feedback – Constructive feedback on the **training program and facilitators** contributed to an environment of **continuous learning and improvement**.

Apply Learning to Real-Life Situations – Participants shared how they planned to **implement the training in their groups**, demonstrating its **practical impact on financial leadership**.

This **comprehensive training** successfully **empowered Development Group Leaders** with **practical tools, financial management strategies, and leadership insights**. By the end of the program, participants felt **more confident and capable in maintaining accurate financial records**, ensuring the **long-term sustainability and efficiency** of their **Self-Help Women Development Groups**.

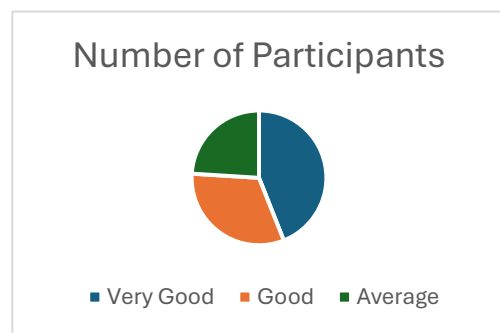
Training Program Evaluation

At the conclusion of the training, participants **enthusiastically evaluated** the program, expressing their **joy and satisfaction** with the learning experience. A total of **25 participants** provided feedback using a **tick-mark evaluation method**, helping to assess the effectiveness of the training and identify areas for improvement.

This evaluation will serve as **valuable feedback** for **VARD Bangladesh**, enabling them to **enhance future training programs** and improve overall training management.

Evaluation

Rating	Number of Participants	Remarks
Very Good	11	Highly satisfied
Good	8	Satisfied
Average	6	Provided suggestions for improvement



Results:

Overall, the evaluation highlighted that the majority of participants found the training **highly beneficial**, with **11 participants** rating it as ‘**Very Good**’, and **8 participants** as ‘**Good**’.

Meanwhile, **6 participants** rated it as ‘**Average**’, offering constructive feedback for **enhancing future training sessions**.

This assessment underscores the **positive impact of the training**, while also providing **insights into further refinement**, ensuring **continuous improvement in training quality and effectiveness**.

Highlights of the Year 2024

We are truly grateful to **God** for the successful completion of **2024**. This year, **VARD Bangladesh** has achieved **significant milestones** through the invaluable support of **MvM**. Below are some of the key highlights of the year:

Gratitude and Commitment to Progress

The **Self-Help Women Development Group** members extend their **heartfelt gratitude** to the **MvM visitors** for taking the time to visit and engage with their group activities. Their presence and **genuine interest** in the group's initiatives have been deeply appreciated, providing encouragement and motivation to continue their efforts in **community development and empowerment**.

We look forward to building on these successes in the coming years and further strengthening our mission of **sustainable development and women's empowerment**.

Declaration of Self-Sufficiency

Guria Begum, a dedicated leader of the Self-Help Women Development Group, exemplifies remarkable progress. Owing two small shops, she has expanded her business, significantly enhancing her family's financial stability. On October 13, 2024, Guria declared her self-sufficiency, no longer needing business loan support from MvM and VARD.

While remaining an active group leader, she has urged MvM to redirect their assistance to other members. Guria expresses deep gratitude to MvM for their pivotal loan support, which transformed her family's livelihood. She echoes the Bahari slum women's appreciation for MvM's invaluable collaboration.

Appreciable Comments of Group Leaders:

"I am self-supported with the help of MvM loan, but I request MvM to help other women who are neglected in our Bahari Slum," said Gurie, leader of the Self-Help group.

"At this moment, I am not a house servant; I am the owner of a small business. Thanks to MvM for their support," said Priya, a member of the Self-Help Group.

"As slum women, we are the light, and MvM is the moon. MvM spreads its light all over the slum, where every woman is like sunshine," said Shamima Begum, a member of the Jhuma Group.

Yearly Progress and Impact of MvM Support

In 2024, **MvM's support** played a transformative role in improving the lives of **Self-Help Women Development Group members**, particularly those from vulnerable slum communities. Below are the key achievements and impacts of MvM's assistance throughout the year:

Financial Inclusion and Business Growth

- MvM extended **financial support** to **55 underprivileged slum women group members**, providing them with **easy access to loans** to establish and expand their **small businesses**.
- Unfortunately, **7 group members** had to **close their membership and relocate** from the area due to personal circumstances.

Leadership and Capacity Building

- A total of **50 out of 80 Self-Help Women Development Group leaders** received **comprehensive training** in **group management, leadership, conflict resolution, and group accounting** through MvM-funded programs.
- This training has **enhanced their knowledge, skills, and confidence**, enabling them to **take on leadership roles, manage group finances, and address conflicts effectively**.
- As a result, these leaders are now **expanding their group activities, maintaining financial records, and developing small businesses**, contributing to the **sustainability of their communities**.

Education and Child Welfare

- The **MvM loan support** has significantly improved the **economic stability** of slum women's families, leading to **better educational opportunities for their children**.
- Out of **119 children** from Bahari Slum women's group families, **81 children (68.06%)** are **now attending school regularly**, ensuring **better prospects for their future**.
- The **joy and enthusiasm** of these children as they attend school reflect the **positive impact of MvM's support** in securing their education.

Employment and Economic Empowerment

- **MvM loan support** directly benefited **78 slum women group members**, enabling them to launch or expand their **income-generating activities (IGAs)**.
- Through these business ventures, **53 women and girls have gained employment**, creating **new job opportunities and economic stability** within the community.

Transformational Success Stories

- By the end of **2024**, one of MvM's loan recipients, **Guria Begum**, successfully built a **self-sustaining small business** that has uplifted her family's financial situation.
- She expresses her **heartfelt gratitude** to **MvM for their generous financial support**, which has helped her become **self-reliant and financially stable**.

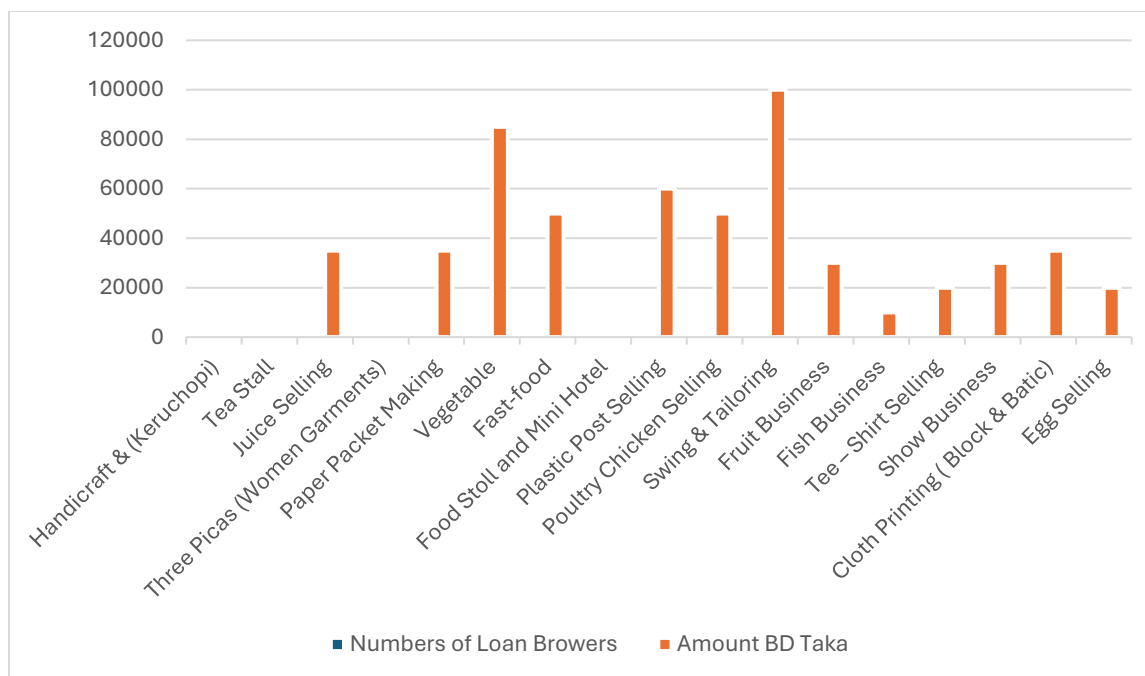
MvM's **dedicated support** in **2024** has played a pivotal role in **economic empowerment, education, leadership development, and financial inclusion** for slum women and their families. The positive **impact on individual lives and the community at large** highlights the **importance of continued investment** in such initiatives to create **sustainable change and long-term empowerment**.

Business Category-Wise Loan Disbursement

In **2024**, **VARD Bangladesh**, with the support of **MvM**, provided **small business loans** to economically disadvantaged **slum women group members**, enabling them to establish and expand their **income-generating activities (IGAs)**. These loans have played a crucial role in **enhancing financial stability and empowering women entrepreneurs**.

The **distribution of loan borrowers** across different **business categories** is as follows:

SL#	Name of Trade / Small Business	# of Women / Beneficiaries	Disbursement Loan BD Taka	Remarks
01.	Handicraft & Keruchopi	29	6,75,000.00	
02.	Tea Stall	6	1,60,000.00	
03.	Juice Selling	2	35,000.00	
04.	Three Picas (Women Garments)	16	4,40,000.00	
05.	Paper Packet Making	2	35,000.00	
06.	Vegetable	3	85,000.00	
07.	Fast-food	2	50,000.00	
08.	Food Stoll and Mini Hotel	5	1,25,000.00	
09.	Plastic Post Selling	2	60,000.00	
10.	Poultry Chicken Selling	2	50,000.00	
11.	Swing & Tailoring	3	1,00,000.00	
12.	Fruit Business	1	30,000.00	
13.	Fish Business	1	10,000.00	
14.	Tee – Shirt Selling	1	20,000.00	
15.	Show Business	1	30,000.00	
16.	Clothe Printing (Block & Batik)	2	35,000.00	
17.	Egg Selling	1	20,000.00	
Total		79	19,60,000.00	



This **targeted financial support** has not only strengthened **individual businesses** but also contributed to the **economic growth and self-sufficiency** of the beneficiaries, allowing them to improve their **livelihoods and community well-being**.

Challenges:

Challenges and Barriers to Socio-Economic Development

Challenges are an inevitable part of human life, often presenting opportunities for **growth, adaptation, and resilience**. In the context of the **Socio-Economic Development Project for Poor Slum Women**, several obstacles have arisen during implementation. Addressing these challenges requires **innovative solutions, strategic planning, and resource mobilization** to ensure the project's success and its intended impact on the **target community**.

Political and Economic Instability

The **Bahari community** is currently facing **political instability and unfavorable economic conditions**, causing uncertainty and distress among residents. These challenges have a **direct impact on small business operations**, making it difficult for **Self-Help Women Development Group members** to **expand their businesses and achieve financial stability**. Women entrepreneurs, in particular, face **significant barriers** in scaling their enterprises due to these **unpredictable circumstances**.

Insufficient Loan Funds for Business Growth

Due to **limited financial resources**, **VARD Bangladesh** is unable to provide **adequate loan support** to all deserving group members. Currently, **427 group members** are unable to access **regular loans to start or grow their small businesses**, posing a major challenge, especially for **new members** seeking economic opportunities. **Expanding loan funding** is crucial to ensuring that more women can **benefit from financial inclusion and entrepreneurship**.

Limited Access to Early Childhood Education

Members of the **Bahari Slum Self-Help Women Development Group** recognize the **importance of education** for their children and are eager to provide them with learning opportunities. However, there is an urgent need for an **Early Childhood Education Center within the camp** to ensure that **young children receive foundational education**. Unfortunately, **VARD Bangladesh lacks sufficient resources** to establish additional educational facilities. As a result, **many slum children are deprived of their right to education**, limiting their future prospects and reinforcing cycles of poverty.

Moving Forward

These challenges underscore the **critical need for increased support, strategic partnerships, and innovative solutions** to sustain and expand the impact of the **Socio-Economic Development Project**. Addressing these barriers through **enhanced funding, policy advocacy, and community-driven initiatives** will ensure that **women entrepreneurs, families, and children in Bahari slum** have **greater opportunities for economic empowerment, business growth, and quality education**.

Lessons Learned in 2024

As we conclude **2024**, our experiences working with the **slum community** have reinforced valuable insights about **resilience, empowerment, and sustainable development**. The key lessons learned throughout the year highlight the **impact of dedication, skill-building, and access to financial resources** in transforming lives.

The Power of Passion, Commitment, and Hard Work

One of the most inspiring lessons from this year comes from **Guria**, a member of the **Self-Help Women Development Group**. With initial financial support from **MvM**, she successfully **established and expanded** her small business. Today, thanks to her **passion, commitment, hard work, and vision**, she has achieved **financial independence** and no longer requires external support. Her journey demonstrates that **determination and perseverance lead to dignity, honor, and self-reliance**.

Key Lesson: Passion, commitment, hard work, and vision are fundamental to **sustainable success and self-sufficiency**.

The Need for Business Capacity-Building Training

Observations from **Bahari Slum** indicate that **small business capacity-building training** is crucial for **women entrepreneurs** seeking to expand their businesses. Women who have **previously received small trade business training** are demonstrating **better business performance, increased income, and improved financial stability**. Expanding access to **business development training** will further enhance their ability to **manage and grow their enterprises effectively**.

Key Lesson: Knowledge, skills, and practical business training are essential for entrepreneurial growth and long-term success.

A Strong Willingness to Expand Businesses

By the end of **2024**, it became evident that members of the **Mirpur Bahari Slum Self-Help Women Development Group** are not only committed to repaying their loans but also eager to **take out new loans to expand their businesses**. This reflects their **determination to scale their enterprises**, improve their economic standing, and achieve **greater financial security**.

Key Lesson: Access to continued financial support and reinvestment opportunities is crucial for **sustaining and expanding small businesses** within the community.

The experiences of **2024** reaffirm the **transformative power of financial inclusion, training, and unwavering determination**. Moving forward, **strengthening business training programs, increasing access to financial resources, and fostering a spirit of self-reliance** will be key to ensuring the continued growth and success of **Self-Help Women Development Group members**.

Conclusion:

As we bid farewell to **2024**, we reflect on a year filled with **progress, empowerment, and transformative impact**. Our collaboration with our esteemed **MvM partners** has been truly **rewarding and inspiring**. We extend our **deepest gratitude** to the **MvM members** for their unwavering support of the **Self-Help Women Development Group** in **Bahari Slum, Mirpur, Dhaka**.

MvM's invaluable support has played a **pivotal role** in the **successful implementation of small businesses** through **income-generating activities (IGAs)**, facilitated by **small loan programs and capacity-building training sessions**. With MvM's assistance, group leaders have:

- ✓ Gained **valuable knowledge** in **small business management**
- ✓ Regularly attended **group meetings** and **deposited savings**
- ✓ Accessed **loans to expand their businesses**
- ✓ Engaged in **discussions on education and women's rights**
- ✓ Shared insights and collaborated on **business-related initiatives**

This **collective support system** has **empowered and uplifted** the **Self-Help Women Development Group members** in **Bahari Slum, Mirpur, Dhaka**, strengthening their **economic stability and self-sufficiency**.

Without MvM's **support** through training and loan programs, many of these women **would not have been able to sustain or expand their businesses**. Today, they are **actively running various small businesses (IGAs)**, earning additional income, and contributing significantly to:

- ✓ **Their children's education**
- ✓ **Household financial stability**
- ✓ **Family well-being**
- ✓ **Supporting their spouses and children**
- ✓ **Providing nutritious food for their families**

This **remarkable progress** reflects an **overall improvement** in the **well-being of slum community members**, fostering **greater dignity, honor, and respect** in society. The **Self-Help Women Development Group members** continue to express their **heartfelt gratitude** to **MvM members and VARD Bangladesh** for their **unconditional love, guidance, and support**.

As the year draws to a close, the **remaining 476 Self-Help Women Development Group members** eagerly await **continued support from MvM**. These women firmly believe that MvM's assistance will bring **meaningful and lasting change** in their lives—**helping them transform their families' future, improve their children's educational opportunities, and elevate their social standing**.

We look forward to the continued **growth, empowerment, and positive transformation** of the **Self-Help Women Development Group members** in the years to come, with the continued **partnership and generosity of MvM.**