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Socio-economic Structure & Sustainable Development of Indigenous Society: A Study on the Munda Community

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Keywords: *socio-economic, sustainable development, munda community, indigenous society.*

GJHSS-D Classification: *LCC: HD1501-1549*



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Socio-economic Structure & Sustainable Development of Indigenous Society: A Study on the Munda Community

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Abstract- The main aim of this research is to determine how to develop sustainable development for the Munda community based on their current socio-economic structure in view of their current condition. The study is mainly quantitative in nature. Koira and Dumuria upazilas of Khulna district and Shyamnagar, Debhata, and Tala upazilas of Satkhira district were selected through convenient sampling techniques for the purpose of collecting primary data because a large part of the Munda community lives in these areas. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from 250 respondents from five preselected areas. The respondents were selected using a simple random sampling technique. The data was analyzed in terms of statistical indicators of frequency and percentage. The results of the study show that social indicators, economic indicators, and cultural factors are very weak among the Munda community. Among the social indicators, Munda women and men have very little interest in following hygiene rules (sanitation, birth control). Economic indicators show income sources and job opportunities. The Munda community has been facing many challenges recently. Many educated boys and girls in the Munda community spend their days in agony due to a lack of suitable jobs, which has a negative impact on everyone in the community. Cultural factors show that the Munda community, which is plagued by poverty, can celebrate its cultural events in a grand manner so that other communities or ethnic groups do not get any idea about their culture. This research will be of great help to those who work with the indigenous communities of Bangladesh, especially the various ministries of the government, NGOs, policymakers, and government and private research organizations.

Keywords: socio-economic, sustainable development, munda community, indigenous society.

I. Introduction

The Mandas are one of 50 indigenous or minor ethnic groups that are dispersed over different parts of Bangladesh. For hundreds of years, the Munda people has resided in the districts of Khulna and Satkhira that are close to the Sundarbans. Their ancestors cleared the forest and prepared the area for farming in the beginning, disregarding the roar of the tiger or the rattle of the snake. The clearing of the trees in the region surrounding the current Sundarbans to make way for habitation by humans was mostly accomplished by the ancestors of the Munda people. Due to a variety of unfavorable circumstances, the number of Mundas living in the Sundarbans and its surroundings is steadily declining. On the other side, Bengali culture has a negative impact on Munda culture, which is already under danger.

Language, culture, religion, and ethnic variety are all present in Bangladesh. There are rivers called Sangu-Maini-Someswari-Seemsang-Chengi and Padma -Meghna-Yamuna-Surma. People of many different races, including the Garo, Hajong, Santal, Khasia, Manipuri, Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Munda, Koch, and Lusai, have existed since the beginning of time. Without taking into account the indigenous tribes and minor ethnic groups, it is impossible to envisage or estimate the overall population of a nation (Shaiful Huda, 2021; Shaiful Huda, 2022). This implies that indigenous, tribal, and minority communities are present in every nation on earth. If tribe is defined in book language, then it is said to be *"socially, economically, and culturally different from the main population of a country who are governed in whole or in part by their traditions, customs, and laws"*. There are 50 tribal communities (Population Census, 2022) living across the country, which is 1.0% (16,50,160) of the total population. Most of them live in hill tract areas, especially in Chittagong hill tracts (Bandarban, Rangamati, and Khagrachari), Sylhet, Khulna, Satkhira, Mymensingh, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Bogra, Rajshahi, etc. (Roy, S., 2020). One of the biggest tribes in South Asia is thought to be the Mundas. Their ancestral home is in the Indian states of Jharkhand and Rachi, yet they follow Indian religion and culture (the mirror image of India). They reside in the states of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and West Bengal in the Chotanagpur area. Additionally, they reside throughout most of Bangladesh. The Munda community represents 3.65% of all tribal communities' total population, with a total population of 60,191 (Population Census, 2022). The Munda community is more prevalent in several sections of Bangladesh's Khulna and Satkhira districts, which lie near the Sundarbans. Additionally, residents of this community reside in the districts of Rajshahi, Naogaon, Dinajpur,

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and Sylhet. The Munda, or Sharna, community, which resides in the Sundarbans and its environs, is one example. Their ancestors were the ones who first cleared the jungles and prepared the area for farming, disregarding the Royal Bengal Tiger, poisonous snakes, and crocodiles.

It is believed that indigenous Munda people from several locations, including Ranchi in India, cleared the Sundarbans' forests two hundred years ago before settling there. The Sundarbans have since come to dominate the Munda family's way of existence (Ritter and Dauksta 2013, p. 645). Although they have always claimed these territories as their own, they have not yet become the proprietors of them. They are unable to sell these lands to anyone as a result. Nobody can purchase it.

Seven Munda groups have so far been identified in Bangladesh. Kompat Munda, Khangar Munda, Kharia Munda, Pathar Munda, Derge Munda, Sanka Munda, and Manki Munda are the names of these individuals. Due to a variety of unfavorable circumstances, the number of Mundas living in the Sundarbans and its surroundings is steadily declining. On the other side, Bengali culture has a negative impact on Munda culture, which is already under danger.

II. Objective of the Study

One of Bangladesh's native ethnic groups is the Munda people. Without sustained socio-economic and cultural growth, Bangladesh's Vision 2021–2041 cannot be implemented (Shaiful Huda, 2021; Shaiful Huda, 2022). The goals of this study are outlined in the following list, which takes into account the Munda community's current condition in terms of social, economic, and cultural factors:

i. To identify problems of the social, economic and cultural indicators of the Munda's community.
ii. To identify the present socio-economic scenario of the Munda's community.
iii. To determine the challenges of the Munda's community.

III. Research Methodology

a) Nature of the Study

The study focuses mostly on numbers. Research will be done to determine the socioeconomic indicators of the Munda community in the first phase. The socioeconomic and cultural markers of the members of the Munda community were then presented in a descriptive study.

b) Population Size

The Munda community in Bangladesh has a population of 60,191, or 3.65% (per cent), of the entire tribal group, which has a population of 16,50,160 according to the 2022 census. Bandarban, Rangamati, Khagrachari, Khulna, Satkhira Sylhet, Mymensingh, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Bogra, and Rajshahi are the district cities of Bangladesh where the Munda population is reported to reside.

c) Sample Area Determination

This study were chose Khulna and Satkhira as the study's data gathering locations. From these two districts, five upazilas (sub-divisions) were chosen: Koura, Dumuria Shyamnagar, Debhata, and Tala (SAMS, 2016; Shaiful Huda, 2021; Shaiful Huda, 2022). We chose districts and upazilas/sub-divisions using an easy sampling method. The researcher chose these places for data collecting since it was discovered via analysis of the data that Munda people reside there more frequently than in other areas.

d) Sample Size

The researcher collected data from 250 Munda community people from the above upazila/sub-divisions. Data was collected from these 250 respondents using simple random sampling technique.

Table 01: Sample Size Allocation

Sampling Unit	Sample Size
Dumuria	6
Koira	74
Shyamnagar	110
Debhata	15
Tala	45
Total	250

e) Sampling Technique

Two divisions and five upazilas or sub-divisions were chosen using a convenient sampling method. 250 individuals from five upazilas or sub-divisions participated in the data collection process; simple random selection were used to pick all respondents.

f) Data collection

The study adopted the interview method to collect information from five upazilas or sub-divisions. A structured questionnaire was developed to accurately obtain the required data from five preselected areas of the study. Categorical questions, open-ended questions, and five-point Likert scale questions were developed by the researcher in line with this study. Before the interview started, a brief explanation of the study was given to the respondent to elicit accurate information. The questionnaire was designed very simply so that the respondents could easily understand it. Respondents were given the opportunity to give their opinions and suggestions freely.

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g) Data Analysis Tools

The collected primary data have been statistically processed, classified, and tabulated using appropriate methods. Since the sample size is not large (N = 250), tables, diagrams, and statistical (frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation) results were derived with the help of computer software called SPSS (Statistical Packages for Social Sciences).

IV. Anthropological Identity of Munda Community

The Munda community and the Australoid tribes share many traits. They often have short, curly hair and a dark complexion. They have a medium build, are quite tough, and work really hard. They are regarded anthropologically as belonging to the Chhota Nagpur tribe, a broader tribal subgroup whose external look is similar to that of the Santals. Mundari is the name of the language used by the Munda people. (Wikipedia, Banglapedia) It belongs to the Austro-Asiatic language family.

V. Rituals of the Munda's

The Munda people had their own language and culture, however most of them have vanished through time. The Sanatan faith is practiced by the majority of the Munda tribes. Their worship has its own qualities and style. The Mundas practice their own unique religion. According to the lunar calendar used by their ancestors, the Munda tribal people practice numerous pujas (Sharmeen, 2013). 'Karam Puja' is the primary holiday celebrated by the Munda people, who practice the 'Mundari' religion. On the Ekadashi tithi of the Bengali month of Bhadra, this event is observed. Additionally, Mundas do Mansa Puja and Sharul Puja at their temples. They dress in a dhoti, a towel, and a thread during these holy celebrations. With the head of the family's combined contribution, they pay for all of these occasions.

VI. Results and Findings

a) Socio-economic Status of Munda's Community

In the age-wise picture of the Munda community in the area under study, 54.0% of the respondents collected in this survey are between 15 and 25 years of age. These youth will lead the Munda community in the future (see Appendix, Table 01). Also, the respondents in other age groups were: below 15 years (1.6%), 25 to 35 (24.0%), 35 to 45 (11.2%), 45 to 55 (4.8%), and above 55 years (4.4%).

The gender-wise participation figures of the respondents are 60.0% male and 40.0% female. This study shows that boys are slightly ahead in education compared to Munda girls. On the other hand, girls are married earlier than boys. There is a trend toward early marriage among the Munda community. Many have pointed to financial chaos and social security as the causes of this problem.

This research presents a gloomy picture of the Munda community's educational situation. 18.8% of individuals are illiterate, and 20.0% just have signature knowledge, according to the study's statistics. The Munda community also attends school at rates of 19.2% for elementary education, 17.2% for secondary education, 17.2% for college, 7.2% for graduate school, and 0.4% for postgraduate study. There are extremely few students with Munda educations present at the university level. 86.6% of poll participants believed that Munda youngsters today are more interested in education than they were in the past. 54.8% of respondents believe that this is because recent government actions in Bangladesh have significantly contributed to the growth of education. NGOs' (17.6%) and locally educated youths' (27.6%) contributions are noteworthy in this respect (see Appendix, Tables 03, 04).

Earlier to the Mundas, agriculture was the primary industry; now, for a variety of reasons, the majority of them now engage day labor and seasonal labor to make a livelihood. According to the statistics, 14.4% of workers are other professions, 6.0% are carpenters, 2.8% are barbers, and 20.4% are day laborers. Farmers make up 17.2% of the workforce.

The distribution of drinking water sources as a percentage is shown in Table 05 (see Appendix) for the Munda community's research area. The survey's results show that 50.0% of people get their drinking water from ponds, rivers, canals, or lakes (surface water), 26% from deep or shallow tube wells, and 24% from rain. Due to the excessive salinity of deep tube well water in the Satkhira region, they use rainfall and pond water as alternatives.

The distribution of the different housing types in the Munda community's study area is broken out in Table 06 (see Appendix). 43.2% of those who responded to the study claim to live in huts or shantytowns, 40.0% in mud homes, and 16.8% in brick homes.

The sanitary system in the Munda community has been improved as a result of several initiatives and campaigns by the government and NGOs. The survey results show that 45.2% of respondents use safe drainage by pouring water sanitation, 29.2% use pit latrines with slabs, ventilated improved latrines, or composting latrines, 9.2% use pit latrines without slabs or open pits, 8.4% use raw, open, or hanging latrines (permanent or temporary), and 8.0% use unsafe drainage by pouring water sanitation (see Appendix, Table 07).

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b) Reasons for the Current Situation of the Munda Community

i. *Social Issue*

In terms of ethnic traits, language, social structure, cultural practices, etc., Bangladesh's tribes are totally distinct from one another. The Munda community is being beset by a number of societal issues. In the opinion of 74.8% of the respondents, their current circumstances are the result of societal difficulties.

Table 02: Do you think the social issue is Responsible for your current situation?

Category	Frequency	Percent
Yes	187	74.8%
No	63	25.2%
Total	250	100.0%

According to 23.5% of the study's participants, the social issue "Lack of adequate Education Facility" is substantially to blame for the Munda community's current state. According to research, these places do not offer education in the Mundari language, which causes many of the local youngsters to lose interest in school.

Table 03: Which of the following do You think is a Social Barrier?

Category	Frequency	Percent
Lack of Awareness of Sanitation	24	12.8%
Lack of Awareness of Child Marriage	34	18.2%
Lack of Awareness of Birth Control	12	6.4%
Lack of adequate Education Facility	44	23.5%
Lack of Proper Health Care Facility	40	21.4%
Social Inequality	26	13.9%
Erosion of Identity	7	3.7%
Total	187	100.0%

Other societal issues they cited were lack of knowledge about sanitation (12.8%), child marriage (28.2%), lack of knowledge about birth control (6.4%), and inadequate access to health care (21.4%), social inequality (13.9%), and identity disintegration (3.7%).

ii. *Economic Issue*

90.8% of respondents believe that economic problems are the reason for their present circumstances. Only 9.2%, on the other hand, believed that economic forces were not to responsible.

Table 04: Do you think the Economic issue is Responsible for your current situation?

Category	Frequency	Percent
Yes	227	90.8
No	23	9.2
Total	250	100

According to 36.1% of respondents, of the variables that make up economic concerns, unemployment is the most significant issue. They claim that as the number of educated jobless people in the Munda community rises daily, the unemployed educated young in the Munda community are growing more insecure and despondent.

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Table 05: Which of the following do you think is an Economic Barrier?

Category	Frequency	Percent
Lack of adequate income sources	44	19.4%
Unemployment	82	36.1%
Loss of Control over Natural Resources	27	11.9%
Poverty and Exploitation	58	25.6%
Lack of Awareness about Government Schemes	16	7.0%
Total	227	100.0%

In addition, 25.6% of poll participants believe that poverty and exploitation, lack of suitable income sources, loss of control over natural resources, and lack of understanding of government programs are to blame for the economy's problems.

iii. Cultural Issue

62.0% of the respondents consider cultural issues to be responsible for their current situation. On the other hand, only 38.0% felt that cultural factors were not responsible.

Table 06: Do you think the Cultural issue is suitable for your current situation?

Category	Frequency	Percent
Yes	155	62.0%
No	95	38.0%
Total	250	100

This study found that, 31.6% of the respondents felt that the Munda's own culture was under threat due to the intrusion of other cultures. The traditional life of the Munda's is on the way of losing the traditional diversity of customs, rituals, religion, festivals, habits etc. because the society is constantly subjected to sarcasm, discrimination and hatred of the majority.

Table 07: Which of the following do You think is a Cultural Barrier?

Category	Frequency	Percent
Penetration of other cultures	49	31.6%
Discouraged in linguistic practice	41	26.5%
Socio-cultural Handicaps	32	20.6%
Cultural Defacement	33	21.3%
Total	155	100.0%

In addition, 26.5% of respondents in this survey believe that language practice discouragement, cultural defacement, and sociocultural handicaps are to blame for the problem. The cultural traditions of the Munda group must be sustained and propagated across the nation with the help of an institutional structure and patronage.

iv. *Natural Issue*

According to the survey, 54.4 percent of the Munda community believe that natural factors are responsible for their current situation. On the other hand, 46.6% felt that natural causes were not responsible.

Table 08: Do you think the Natural issue is Responsible for your current situation?

Category	Frequency	Percent
Yes	141	56.4
No	109	43.6
Total	250	100

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Both human-caused and natural catastrophic events affect Mundas. Unplanned dams on rivers and the declaration of reserve forests are examples of man-made disasters. According to the poll, 32.6% of respondents valued "Declaration of reserve forest" as a human-made cause more highly. The Mundas lost control of the forest as a result of this human-made cause. Munda people who depend on the forest have had to alter their way of life.

Table 08: Which of the following do you think is a Natural Barrier?

Category	Frequency	Percent
Declaration of reserve forest	46	32.6%
Unplanned dams in rivers	41	29.1%
Natural calamities (storms, floods, salinity, floods, droughts)	54	38.3%
Total	141	100.0%

Additionally, 29.1% of the respondents said that "unplanned damming of rivers" had a negative impact on the Munda community's way of life. This unforeseen river damming has eliminated the livelihood of the Munda fisherman.

However, 38.3% of the respondents believed that natural disasters were to blame for their predicament. Storms, floods, salinity, tides, and droughts all constitute natural calamities. In this area, storms, tides, and floods frequently occur (Perucca, 2013).

c) Challenges of the Munda Community in Daily Life

Ethnically, the Munda community is industrious and tolerant in nature. They are living their normal lives fighting against nature and man-made problems. But in recent decades they have been facing various challenges.

Table 09: Challenges of the Munda Community in Daily Life

Category	Frequency	Percent
Public life and culture are under threat	62	24.8%
Safety and Security	79	31.6%
Torture by Neighboring Bengalis	60	24.0%
Forced Occupation of Land	49	19.6%
Total	250	100.0%

According to the study, 31.6% of participants believe that the security and safety of the Munda community is now the largest problem. These fears have been sparked among them by certain recent events.

The threats to public life and culture (24.8%), torture by nearby Bengalis (24.0%), and forced land takeover (19.6%) are additional difficulties encountered by the Munda people.

d) Sustainable Development of Munda's Community

Sustainable development of the Munda community is required to address the prevailing problems and challenges of the Munda community. Now is the time for a long-range plan to create employment, spread education, improve communication systems, and addressing existing problems (social, economic, cultural and natural).

Table 10: Distribution of Strategies for Sustainable Development

Category	Frequency	Percent
Employment generation	81	32.4%
Spread of Education	71	28.4%
Improving Communication Systems	51	20.4%
Addressing existing problems (social, economic, cultural, and natural)	47	18.8%
Total	250	100.0%

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According to the study, 32.4% of participants believe that the creation of new employment may contribute to the community's residents' sustainable growth. By generating more jobs, the Munda community's population will have a greater source of income and their unemployment rate will decline. The current social issues in society will continue to be solved as their economic independence is attained. Education will be more popular, and social biases will no longer exist in the Munda society.

The expansion of education (28.4%), enhancing communication systems (20.4%), and addressing current issues (18.8%) are some measures that respondents believe may be used in Munda society to alleviate or eliminate their social, economic, cultural, and natural concerns. Tribal communities typically have education rates that are substantially lower than the national norm. Language hurdles, a lack of resources, the prejudice of classmates and professors, and the lack of chances for racial minorities in educational institutions are the major causes of this.

Indigenous peoples' concerns have been raised in relation to some of these sustainable development objectives. The Bangladeshi government has vowed to support the growth of both tribal and nontribal populations in terms of education. The government of Bangladesh intends to print pre-primary textbooks in six languages beginning with the upcoming academic year, which is a commendable step to provide inclusive education for children from ethnic minority groups.

The administration placed a strong focus on increasing services for social security, health, and education in the seventh five-year plan. The proposal also admits that the land problem hasn't been settled yet. The strategy recognized many major issues, such as reducing poverty and ensuring that tribal and tribal populations had the right to language and education, and aggressive measures were made to solve them (Prothom Alo, 2016).

The researcher believes that if everything can be completed properly, then the indigenous and tribal communities can make their full contribution to achieving the sustainable development goals of Bangladesh.

VII. Recommendations

The Munda community is distant from civilisation in the dawn of the twenty-first century. The residents of this hamlet have not changed, with the exception of technical and socioeconomic advancements. The location where their forefathers started their adventure 200 years ago has altered a little bit in the 21st century. The Munda community is being beset by a number of issues. The following suggestions are to be viewed as being of utmost importance in resolving the Munda people's current issues:

i. To preserve the language and heritage of the Munda's by officially documenting and assigning intellectual property rights in their name.
ii. Officially, their culture, religious festivals and traditional events should be presented to all people across the country through print media and electronic media.
iii. Steps should be taken to connect the people of the Munda community with the mainstream of the country through government, semi-government and NGOs.
iv. Necessary number of educational institutions and educational curriculum should be introduced for Munda's. Especially at the primary level providing instruction in the Munda's own language.
v. Provision of merit-based employment in local administration system.
vi. To keep representatives of Munda's in local governance.
vii. Government to launch various social schemes for sustainable development of socio-economic structure of Munda community.

VIII. Conclusions

Although the ancestors in the Sundarbans region first believed that by living in the forest, the entire land would be theirs, the current situation is the exact reverse. The Mundas, who were the original sons of the soil in that area, are currently landless. Along with losing their land rights, they have also lost their way of life, happiness, and tranquility. Our own culture and language are at jeopardy right now. The socioeconomic environment is on the verge of collapse. The original offspring of nature, however, never give up. To assert their own language, culture, and rights, they have established their own organization. Additionally, collaborative governmental and private initiatives are trying to establish the rights of indigenous Munda people and raise their standard of living.

Declarations

Ethical Statement

The confidentiality of the participants' information was taken very seriously in this study. Not submitted or published elsewhere prior to submission to this journal.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Availability of Data

The datasets used in the present study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Appendix

Demographic Characteristics

Table 01: Distribution of Descriptive Analysis of Demographic Characteristics

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	%
Age Category		
Less than 15	4	1.6%
15 to 25	135	54.0%
25 to 35	60	24.0%
35 to 45	28	11.2%
45 to 55	12	4.8%
Above 55	11	4.4%
Gender		
Male	150	60.0%
Female	100	40.0%
Education Level		
Illiterate/ Tip	47	18.8%
Signature Knowledge	50	20.0%
Primary Education	48	19.2%
Secondary Education	43	17.2%
College Level	43	17.2%
Graduate Level	18	7.2%
Post Graduate Level	1	0.4%

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Marital Status		
Married	145	58.0%
Unmarried	105	42.0%
Religious of types		
Muslim	30	12.0%
Hindu	215	86.0%
Christian	5	2.0%
Total	250	100%

Table 02: Distribution of Occupation of the Respondent's

Category	Frequency	Percent
Day Labor	51	20.4
Seasonal Labor	79	31.6
Farmer	43	17.2
Fisherman	19	7.6
Carpenter	15	6.0
Barber	7	2.8
Others	36	14.4
Total	250	100.0

Table 03: Distribution of Education Expansion

Category	Frequency	Percent
Yes	217	86.80%
No	33	13.20%
Total	250	100%

Table 04: Distribution of Important Role in Educational Expansion

Category	Frequency	Percent
Government	119	54.8%
NGO	38	17.6%
Local educated youth	60	27.6%
Total	217	100.0%

Table 05: Main Source of Drinking Water

Category	Frequency	Percent
Tube well (Deep/Shallow)	65	26.0%
Pond/river/canal/lake (Surface Water)	125	50.0%
Rain water	60	24.0%
Total	250	100.0%

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Table 06: Types of Houses of the Munda's Community

Category	Frequency	Percent
Mud House	100	40.0%
Hut/Slum	108	43.2%
Made of Brick House	42	16.8%
Total	250	100.0%

Table 07: Sanitation Type

Category	Frequency	Percent
Safe drainage by pouring water	113	45.2%
Unsafe drainage by pouring water	20	8.0%
Pit Latrine with Slab/ Ventilated Improved Latrine/Composting Latrine	73	29.2%
Pit Latrine without Slab/open pit	23	9.2%
Raw/Open/Hanging Latrine (Permanent/ Temporary)	21	8.4%
Total	250	100.0%

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