

Livelihood Essentials for the *Charland* Children of Sirajganj District in Bangladesh

Shammy Islam

Lecturer, Department of Sociology
Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur, Bangladesh
Email: shammyislam99999@gmail.com

Abstract

The paper is wedded to focus on livelihood essentials for the *charland* children of Char Chhinna in the Jamuna riverine ecosystem of Bangladesh. Their subsistence is destroyed annually by and riverbank erosion displacement. This terrible condition affects their own habitat and pushes them into the world of uncertain poverty. They are impelled to find shelters under their neighbours' and/or relatives' houses. The riverbank erosion displacement exercises detrimental effects on the total development and primary socialization of *charland* children in different forms. The paper is primarily based on the data gathered through direct interviewing with the purposively chosen *charland* children and household heads of the study village, observation, focus group discussions (FGDs), case studies, and informal interviews with some stakeholders. Both the qualitative interpretation and quantitative measurement of social reality are considered to be reciprocally focused here. For analysing the unit of this study, the primary and empirical sources of data are exclusively utilized. Due to riverbank erosion displacement the world of uncertainties that *charland* children have to face economic insecurities, social insecurities, health insecurities, deprivation of civic rights and the like. A number of suggestive policy measures for sustainable rural development are formulated based on findings as the final job of this research.

Keywords: Riverbank erosion displacement, *Uthuli* children, *Chukani* children, livelihood essentials

Introduction

The environmental disaster of riverbank erosion displacement exercises a devastating impact upon the livelihood of most of *charland* population in riverine Bangladesh. The people of Bangladesh affected every year by riverbank erosion is one of unpredictable and critical types climate change induced catastrophic environmental disasters that cause devastation to the livelihood of riparian people of Bangladesh. The riverbank erosion displaced people are unruly affected by these onslaught and undergoes sever danger that incurs losses to their physical appurtenance that the social structure is ruthlessly disrupted and also destroyed all the essential functions of the society. For persistence, the riverbank erosion displacees have to undertake and formulate various types of indigenous strategies to reduce economic and social insecurities and hardship induced by the catastrophic environment extreme

event of bank erosion displacement on the right bank of Jamuna River. Due to demolishing riverbank erosion displacement the world of ambiguity forced the *charland* children to assist their parents in unpaid familial jobs at both the homestead and field levels i.e., garnering daily necessities, earning cash money by selling manual labour in various odd jobs etc. All that economic insecurities due to low familial income, erosion of capital, increase of indebtedness, social insecurities, deprivation of civic rights, inadequate parental care in some cases, lack of peer interaction, health insecurities due to lack of access to health services, lack of infrastructure of health services, lack of health education and hygienic awareness, no schooling, lack of recreation, malnutrition, unhygienic sanitation, unsafe drinking water and all uncertainties leads to deleterious effects on the

Livelihood essentials for the charland children

total development and primary socialization of *uthuli*¹ and *chukani*² *charland*³ children in

¹ In the Jamuna *charland* and/or Sirajganj region, the riverbank erosion displacee households and/or people are called *uthuli* who are sheltered at relatives' or neighbors' or others' house and/or land without payment.

² In the Jamuna *charland* and/or Sirajganj region, the riverbank erosion displacee households and/or people

various forms that is extremely depressing for our nation. Thus, the study examines the livelihood essentials for the *uthuli* and *chukani* children of Char Chhinna village annually affected and displaced by riverbank erosion attack of Jamuna River.

are called *chukani* who are sheltered at relatives' or neighbors' or others' house and/or land with payment.

³ Small islet emerged in the riverbed sporadically.

Methodology

The paper is based on the findings of MSS thesis (Islam, 2016) of the author. Char Chhinna is a medium sized village of Monsumnagar Union under Kazipur upazila of Sirajganj District in north-western Bangladesh. Kazipur upazila is one of the most erosion-prone areas of the Jamuna River and thus the *charland* village Char Chhinna of Kazipur Upazila is selected purposively as study locale. The present study adopted two principal techniques of social survey method — questionnaire and interviewing — for collecting the primary and empirical data. The paper is primarily based on the data gathered through direct interviewing with the purposively chosen 230 *charland* children and 110 *uthuli* and *chukani* household heads from 110 displacee households whereas *uthuli* household is 41 and *uthuli* children is 95 on the other hand *chukani* household is 69 and *chukani* children is 135 and their age category is 5 to 15 of the study village. In addition to social survey, the research collected data through conducting 1 focus group discussions (FGDs), observation, and 5 case studies of selected respondents. A total of 2

informal interviews with the Monsumnagar Union Parishad leaders and community members are incorporated in this research for gathering more empirical data. The data collected and analyzed in this research are qualitative and quantitative in nature. Both the qualitative interpretation and quantitative measurement are considered reciprocally in analyzing the social reality of devastated *charland* livelihood caused by flood and riverbank erosion displacement the *uthuli* and *chukani* displacees have to face and to cope with. Both the qualitative interpretation and quantitative measurement of social reality are considered to be reciprocally focused here. For analyzing the unit of this study, the primary and empirical sources of data are exclusively utilized. The collected data throughout the fieldwork are analyzed in descriptive and qualitative manner. The study is aptly intended to establish the analytical and critical evaluation of the collected data. In addition to the qualitative data, the quantitative data are classified in simple and cross tables. These tables are prepared in order to show frequencies and percentages.

Findings and Discussion

Socioeconomic Profile

The members of society desire proper socialization and livelihood essentials of the children and its realization is chiefly based on their socioeconomic status. The socioeconomic status shapes the development and socialization of the children within the hierarchy of their social structure. A considerable number of sociological literatures (Durkheim 1912; Sorokin 1927; Lipset and Bendix 1959; Anderson 1961; Mcgurie

1964) affirm and recognize that the socioeconomic background characteristics are significantly correlated to social mobility and/or change occurred in the social reality. Edinger and Searing (1967) adopted the 'Social Background Approach' to infer that the social background and recruitment patterns facilitate understanding of the social structure and mechanisms through which the leaders have come about. It is observed in the study village that riverbank erosion

displacement is the only independent variable and it is the catalyst of social changes in displacee livelihood traced out in the present study. The socioeconomic characteristics of the riverbank erosion displacees are dependent variables of and subjects of changes to the riverbank erosion displacement.

A large number of riparian villages of Sirajganj District have migrated to Char Chhinna from Maznabari, Fuljhur and Saldoho village due to the uncontrollable threat of riverbank erosion displacement. Their displacement statuses are categorized into four types. These are: once, twice, thrice, and more than thrice. The field data explore the social reality that around 20.91 (n=23 of 110) percent of the sample households of Char

Chhinna village have experienced the once displacement status and 19.09 (n=21 of 110) percent are twice. These proportions are followed by 29.09 (n=32 of 110) percent thrice and similarly 30.91 (n=34 of 110) percent households more than thrice displaces in Char Chhinna village. The findings of my study have empirically been supported by a study of Wiest (1991). It shows that 64 percent sample households displaced due to erosion at least once, 40 percent experienced displacement between one and three times, 24 percent between four and six times, 15 percent between seven and nine times, and 25 percent ten times or more. This is also empirically supported by the findings of Mahbub and Islam (1991).

Table 1: Landownership of the respondent households

Landownership (in acre)		Respondent Displacee Households					
		<i>Uthuli</i>		<i>Chukani</i>		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Landless							
With Homestead		-			-	-	
With No Homestead		34	37.36	57	62.64	91	100
Total		34	37.36	57	62.64	91	82.73
Landowner							
Marginal	≤1.00	3	60.00	2	40.00	5	26.32
Poor	>1.00 - ≤2.50	4	36.36	7	63.64	11	57.89
Middle	>2.50 - ≤7.50	-		3	100	3	15.79
Rich	>7.50	-		-		-	
Total		7	36.84	12	63.16	19	17.27
Grand Total		41	37.27	69	62.73	110	100

The *uthuli* and *chukani* displacee lost their homestead land and they have no resources to buy land for start afresh. The *uthuli* and *chukani* displacee people have no own land for post-displacement living arrangement. The sample data reveals most of the displacee families' (82.73%; n=91 of 110) are landless (Table 1). The *uthuli* displacee households constitute more than 37 percent (37.27%; n=41 of 110) of the total respondent households, the *chukani* displacee households position at the top. The *chukani* displacee households are 69 (62.73%; of 110) in number. The *uthuli* displacee households have to pay no rent for homestead plot for their resettlement, and shelter in dwelling house

provided by their neighbours and relatives. On the other hand, the *chukani* displacee households have to pay annual rent for land for resettlement, and dwelling house. It is fact that the preponderant majority of parents (76.36%; n=168 of 220) are illiterate. With the limited source of income and inadequate asset they could manage to earn a meagre or low income for day-to-day survival of their household. The monthly income structure of the parents indicates an adverse situation in continuing their familial survival. It is observed that 50.91 percent parents have opportunity to earn Taka 6000 to 11000 per month and they are recognized as lower upper whereas 03.64 percent upper displacee parents

Livelihood essentials for the charland children

earn Taka 21000 to 26000 per month. It is observed that 20.91 percent lower displacee household whereas *chukani* 65.22 percent and *uthuli* 34.78 percent maintain their family by 1000 to 6000 Taka per month. This amount is very meagre to survive and it's very difficult to maintain a family or overcome the poor economic condition caused by displacement.

Livelihood Essentials for the Charland Children

The disaster of riverbank erosion displacement causes multifarious adverse impacts on the livelihood of *uthuli* and *chukani* children of Char Chhinna. They are rendered unable to fulfil their daily food requirement and other essentials due to insufficient and irregular everyday household income. To continue their familial survival, they use their indigenous knowledge, skills and labor, and try to formulate the strategies to cope with precarious conditions of their *charland* habitat. In that situation, all members especially children of the *uthuli* and *chukani* households have to support their parents for keeping their families at subsistence level. These children are forced to involve in household chores and in odd income earning activities and thus their childhood, and adolescence are seized by their forced role as adult to maintain their familial survival.

Access to Schooling and Educational Status

The study village of Char Chhinna has been suffering from sheer lack of primary school, high school, and college and thus the *uthuli* and *chukani* children have no opportunity of receiving schooling at their own village. They have to go to Maznabari Government Primary School for having schooling for formal primary education. This school is situated in adjoining Maznabari village. Due to riverbank erosion displacement they have to support their parents by doing household chores and income earning activities to mitigate their economic hardship. So it is very difficult to continue their schooling regularly. The girls are employed as domestic workers and the boys as daily labourers in household, farm, and nonfarm levels for that they are dropped out from school. After leaving school, initially they assist their parents to do household works, and finally they enrol in low

paid jobs depending on their age for earning money (Islam, 2015). Most of them to remain illiterate without receiving formal education from school and it cause detrimental effects on their development and primary socialization as such adversities seize all sorts of opportunity for growing and blooming their professional and social life in long run (Islam, 2009). Social reality explore that the *uthuli* and *chukani* displacee children of Char Chhinna have poor educational attainment. In calculating literacy rate, the mentally and physically retarded (3.04%; n=7 of 230) and non-schooling aged children (5.65%; n=13 of 230) are excluded. Literacy rate of children in this study locale is 36.67 percent (n=77 of 210). The field data attest the fact that about 63.33percent (n=133 of 210) displacee children are illiterate who don't know how to read and write whereas *uthuli* illiteracy rate is 42.86 percent (n=57 of 133) and *chukani* illiteracy rate is 57.14percent (76 of 133) which is slightly higher than *uthuli* children (Table 2). They were never enrolled in school and not interested to go school for study as well. It is the fact that 23.38 percent *uthuli* children and 37.67 percent *chukani* children are drop out from school.

Case # 1

Sihab Uddin of Char Chhinna is a *chukani* young of 11. He is a student of Class IV. His father is a day laborer. He is a member of more than thrice displacee family. After displacement, his father was compelled to engage him at his earlier age in income earning jobs for their survival. He goes to school irregularly. He worked in a hotel as table boy and he earned money per month Taka 1200.

Sanitation and Hygiene Awareness

Sanitation and hygiene awareness is very essential for healthy life. But the social reality of Char Chhinna village attests the fact that most of the respondent of *uthuli* and *chukani* children and their parents are lack of sanitation and hygiene awareness, and of health education. Most of the respondent households (65.45%; n=72 of 110) in this village don't use hygienic sanitary latrine. They use unhygienic latrine which cause harm

and health hazards to the displacee users. Additionally, many individual respondents (displacee children and their parents) usually use open field, bushes, side of ponds or river and *charland* for defecation and they don't maintain personal cleanliness after defecation and even

wash hand before taking food. Lack of satisfactory disposal of human excreta creates a very congenial atmosphere for the spread of hookworm infection and other diseases which is very harmful for physical development.

Table 2: Educational status of *uthuli* and *chukani* children

Children's Education	Schooling Children				Dropped Out Children				Total N=230		
	<i>Uthuli</i> N=95		<i>Chukani</i> N=135		<i>Uthuli</i> N=95		<i>Chukani</i> N=135		n	%	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%			
Non-eligible Children for Schooling											
Non-schooling Aged Children	5	38.46	8	61.54					13	5.65	
Retarded Children	2	28.57	5	71.42					7	3.04	
Total	7	35.00	13	65.00					20	8.70	
Eligible Children for Schooling											
Total Illiterate	57	42.86	76	57.14					133	63.33	
Primary	Class I-V	11	22.45	15	30.61	10	20.41	13	26.53	49	63.64
	PECE Passed	2	18.18	2	18.18	3	27.27	4	36.36	11	14.29
Junior Secondary	Class VI-VIII	-	-	-	-	1	16.67	5	83.33	6	07.79
	JSC Passed	-	-	-	-	2	28.57	4	57.14	7	09.09
Secondary	Class IX-X	-	-	-	-	2	40.00	3	60.00	5	06.49
	SSC Passed	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Higher Secondary	Class XI-XII	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	HSC Passed	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Literate	13	16.88	17	22.08	18	23.38	29	37.67	77	36.67	

Forced Engagement in Household and Economic Activities

The *uthuli* and *chukani* children have to provide supplementary income in whatever manner they could with their parents. They have to pay manual labor in doing own household activities. They are not paid for these works culturally. It is reported that more or less all the *uthuli* and *chukani* children are engaged in unpaid familial activities at and outside their own dwelling house. Field data attest the fact that *uthuli* and *chukani* children are involved in unpaid manual labor such as collecting green and dried straw, collecting dried branches, gathering cow-dung, cattle grazing, tending animal at homestead, cutting and collecting grass and creepers, carrying food for parent at workplace, caring siblings, selling goods, buying food, planting trees and vegetables, collecting crops from field,

washing clothes, caring elderly and sick members, cooking daily meals, livestock and poultry rearing, cleaning dwelling rooms and courtyard, etc. It is noticeable that more than 44 percent *uthuli* (44.21%; n=42 of 95) and nearly 47 percent *chukani* (46.67%; n=63 of 135) female children are impelled to involve in various odd earning activities. On the other hand, nearly 56 percent *uthuli* (55.79 %; n=53 of 95) and more than 53 percent *chukani* (53.33%; n=72 of 135) male children are forced to engage in various odd jobs. The first majority of the *uthuli* and *chukani* children (20.00%; n=46 of 230) have to spend their manual labor in crop harvesting. The second majority of the *uthuli* and *chukani* children are compelled to involve in cattle grazing (14.78%; n=34 of 230; 2nd majority), and the third majority of them are in livestock and poultry rearing (10.87%; n=25 of

Livelihood essentials for the charland children

230; 3rd majority). Furthermore, they are engaged in various types working such as drying fish, fish collection, and servant, detach nut cobs, agricultural labor, day labor, rickshaw pulling, shop keeping, nut selling, and banana selling, tailoring, hotel boy, boat helper and knitting of fishing net for supplementing their familial survival.

Case # 2

M Hydar Ali is of 13 years old. He lost their homestead and agricultural land due to riverbank erosion displacement. His displacement status is twice. He is a day labor. His father does not allow him to receive education. It is because that their familial economic condition is very poor.

Uthuli and Chukani Children in Household Chores and Income Earning Activities

Total Uthuli and Chukani Children	230	100%
Unpaid Familial Working Children	97	42.17%
Daily Income Earning Children	133	57.83%

The unstable and uncertain income of the displacee households of Char Chhinna village pushed the *uthuli* and *chukani* displacees into operation of economic activities. As a matter of fact, all *uthuli* and *chukani* displacee children are driven to engage themselves as supplementary means of earning from various economic activities but all the *uthuli* and *chukani* children are not paid for their household economic activities. In this village, 57.83 percent (133 of 230) *uthuli* and *chukani* children supplement their family by earning money from various odd jobs. It is to be noted here that in addition to money earning activities, almost all of them assist their parents in household chores as well. Such child labor prevents the *uthuli* and *chukani* children from schooling, recreation, and enjoying the life cycle of childhood. It is harmful for their proper socialization and also detriment their child development which is very important for their life.

Sufferings from Common Diseases

Most *charland* children of Char Chhinna are not aware of their health. They suffer from some common disease such as diarrhoea, cholera, fever, dysentery, cough, gastric etc. They don't have opportunities of taking adequate amount of food on regular basis. The first majority of children (30.00%; n=69 of 230) are suffered from fever. The second majority of children (20.43%; n=47 of 230) are suffered from cough and the

third majority children (16.96%; n=39 of 230) are suffer from diarrhoea. It is significantly noteworthy that some children are suffered from skin disease (15.22%; n=35 of 230). Other proportions of them have to suffer from dysentery (10.00%; n=23 of 230) and cholera (7.37%; n=17 of 230). But they are not aware of their disease because of illiteracy and low livelihood status.

Medical Treatment Received

Information regarding the modes of treatment received by these children reveals a clear picture of their inability to get rid of the diseases. Apart from their inattention unconsciousness, it was mainly because of their meagre familial income and resources for which they could not afford to spend required amount of money for proper treatment.

The field data attest the fact that a good number of children (32.61%; n=75 of 230) receive *kabiraji* (indigenous herbal treatment) (Table 3). The second majority of the displacee children (30.00%; n=69 of 230) usually receive homeopathic treatment from their village doctor. They are not interested to receive allopathic treatment because of its high cost. There is no health complex, hospital or community clinic as well in this village. But there is a community clinic at Kumaribari village which is situated at a distance of four kilometres away from Char Chhinna village and the one and only means of

transportation is country boat to reach this community clinic. It serves only for two days a week. Only an official distributes some medicine for fever, cough, and other general illness. Sometimes they are not able to get such type of medicine. For that reason they are not interested to go to community clinic regularly. Their transportation system is very bad. There is no van, rickshaw or other transportation without

country boat and bicycle. If they need to go to clinic or government hospital, they have to go to Kazipur upazila Hospital (8 kilometres) by boat and/or to Sirajganj District Hospital by boat (8 kilometres) and by road (32 kilometres) and it takes time 3 to 4 hours. It's very time-consuming and tiring and thus is found impossible for female children. For that reason most of the *uthuli* and *chukani* children are in health insecurities.

Table 3: Types of medical treatment are received by the displacee children

Types of medical treatment	Displacee Children					
	Uthuli Children N=95		Chukani Children N=135		Total N=230	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
<i>Kabiraji</i>	30	40.00	45	60.00	75	32.61
Homeopathic	29	42.03	40	57.97	69	30.00
Ayurvedic	25	44.64	31	55.36	56	24.35
Allopathic	11	36.67	19	63.33	30	13.04

Opportunities of Recreation

Sports are considered as the basic requirements for child development. Only 30.00 percent *uthuli* and *chukani* children (n=69 of 230) have get somehow opportunities of exercising sports and games. It is also disappointing fact that only 37.83 percent (n=87 of 230) displacee children

get opportunities of recreation in their own ways. It is evident in the study village most of the displacee children (62.17%; n=143 of 230) don't get any opportunities of recreation. It is observed that 46.15 percent (n=66 of 143) *uthuli* children and 53.84 percent (n=77 of 143) *chukani* children don't have access to enjoy recreation.

Conclusion

The present study attests an insecure social reality that the overall scenario of riverbank erosion displacement impact on the aforementioned *charland* people is very disheartening. Such environmental disaster intermittently causes terrifying and perilous social reality for the total development of *uthuli* and *chukani* household in different forms. Due to the devastating attack of riverbank erosion displacement all *uthuli* and *chukani* families have to face the hardship of economic, social insecurities. All the insecurities caused by riverbank erosion displacement leads to deprivation, destitution, hardship, impoverishment, and more vulnerability of the *uthuli* and *chukani* families. In this situation, the displacee parents are compelled to employ their

children in various income earning jobs and various household chores for maintaining their familial survival. This involvement prevents them from attending all important stages and from enjoying privileges and supports required for child development. They are deprived of playing games, recreations, schooling, healthcare, and protection from violence. Inadequate food taking, health hazard, irregular schooling or dropout from schooling of *uthuli* and *chukani* children are the regular image of Char Chhinna village which affect their childhood and primary socialization in expected manner.

As the riverbank erosion displacement is one of major disasters in Bangladesh, comprehensive riverbank erosion preventive management policy should be made at national level and be operated

Livelihood essentials for the charland children

at respective local level. The relief and rehabilitation for the *uthuli* and *chukani* displacees should be pressed into service. The government should be provided emergency financial supports with the displacees in the immediacy of riverbank erosion displacement. The GOs and NGOs should introduce education insurance, and health insurance schemes for the *uthuli* and *chukani* children. The GOs and NGOs should create various income generation

activities (IGAs) for the displacee parents so that they can earn more than their present irregular scanty income. The interest-free and/or minimal interest-based micro-credits and required trainings should be provided with the displacees in continuing their IGAs. Their economic solvency enables them to withdraw their children from the participation in odd income earning activities that prevents their schooling and also basic needs.

References

- Anderson, C.A. 1961. A Skeptical Note on the Relation of Vertical Mobility to Education. *American Journal of Sociology*, LXVI: 288.
- Durkheim, E. 1912. *The Suicide*. Paris: Passin.
- Edinger, L. and S. Donald. 1967. *Political Leadership in Industrialized Societies: Studies in Comparative Analysis*. New York: John Willey.
- Islam, M.Z.A. 2009. Indigenous Adaptation Strategies of the Riverbank Erosion Displacees in Bangladesh: A Study of Two North-western Riparian Villages, at the IHDP (International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change) Open Meeting 2009, [website](http://www.openmeeting2009.org/) <http://www.openmeeting2009.org/>.
- Islam, M.Z.A. 2015. Social Role Imppecuniousness in the Life Cycle of Charland Children in Bangladesh: A Study on Child Rights and Securities in Riverine Bangladesh. A Child Rights Situation Monitoring Report under the Mainstreaming Child Rights in the Academia in Bangladesh (CRG) Project, INCIDIN Bangladesh, Dhaka sponsored by Save the Children International, Dhaka.
- Islam, S. 2016. Familial Survival Strategies of the *Uthuli* and *Chukani* Children in Charland Bangladesh: A Study on Riverbank Erosion Displacees of Sirajganj District, unpublished master's thesis, Department of Sociology, University of Rajshahi, Rajshahi, Bangladesh.
- Islam, S. 2017. Natural Resource Utilization and Sustainable Development of the *Uthuli* and *Chukani* People in Charland Bangladesh: A Study of Char Chhinna in the Jamuna Riverine Ecosystem. *Institute of Bangladesh Studies*, Rajshahi, Bangladesh.
- Lipset, S.M. and R. Bendix. 1959. *Social Mobility in Industrial Society*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Mahbub, A.Q.M. and N. Islam. 1991. Urban Adjustment by Erosion Induced Migrants to Dhaka. In: Elahi, K. M., K. S. Ahmed, and M. Mafizuddin (Eds.), *Riverbank Erosion, Flood and Population Displacement in Bangladesh*. Dhaka: REIS, JU.
- McGurie, C. 1964. Adolescent Society and Social Mobility. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Sorokin, P.A. 1927. *Socio-cultural Mobility*. Glencoe: The Free Press.
- Wiest, R.E. 1991. Domestic Group Dynamics in the Resettlement Process Related to Riverbank Erosion in Bangladesh. In: Elahi, K. M., K. S. Ahmed, and M. Mafizuddin (Eds.), *Riverbank Erosion, Flood and Population Displacement in Bangladesh*. Dhaka: REIS, JU.