

**Landholding as a lifeline: The impact of the Rohingya Crisis on farmers in Teknaf
and Ukhia**

By

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Economics and Social Sciences in the partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Social Sciences in Anthropology

Department of Economics and Social Sciences

Brac University

January 2023

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that:

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing a degree at BRAC University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Acknowledgement

I would first like to thank all the participants of this study. The farmers I have met during my fieldwork have not only treated me with immense warmth, but their attention to detail in expressing their hardships was more than I could ever ask for. I also want to thank Noman bhaiah, Aynul bhaiah, Kawser bhaiah, Akash bhaiah, Fatme uncle and Aman uncle, who connected me to the focus group participants and helped add familiarity to a place which initially felt very distant. The support of everyone in Teknaf was the reason why I could persevere through the various obstacles on the field.

I want to thank my thesis advisor Professor Shahidur Rahman, who has guided me through my thesis and has been like a mentor to me during my time at Brac University. His lectures have helped me find the research areas which interest me the most in sociology. He has taught me to constantly keep challenging myself, especially in new environments which I struggled with more before. He has also taught me to stop thinking in binaries, which is a very important lesson in our field. I will forever be grateful for the research experiences he has helped me obtain and the genuineness with which he has guided me. Words cannot articulate how grateful I feel for having the privilege of being his student.

I want to express appreciation to Professor Seuty Sabur for helping me understand the social systems I am embedded in and contribute to, which influences my daily actions. I wish to thank Shehzad M Arifeen for introducing me to the philosophers who have transformed my ideological beliefs, and for helping me figure out the techniques and questions I approach all self-study sessions with. I also want to give thanks to the lecturers who helped me along the way, including Zareef Karim, Seema Amin and Aftab Alam.

I want to thank my parents for their encouragement and support and for being my teachers outside of courses and books. Lastly, I want to show gratitude to the friends I made at Brac who have influenced how I evaluate the world, including Priyong, Mashaekh, Adiba, Tazwar, Asif, Mehran and Ruth.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ABD	Accumulation by dispossession
ARSA	Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army
BADC	Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation
CiC	Camp in Charge
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
HYV	High yield variety
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non-governmental Organisation
MNC	Multinational Corporation
SAF	Structural Adjustment Fund
TCCA	Thana Central Cooperative Associations
TSC	Thana Sales Centre
WB	World Bank

Abstract

Most cohesion and host community reports regarding the Rohingya crisis frequently mention the adversities faced by farmers as a result of the mass exodus, even though their adversities are discussed vaguely, with farmers being discussed as if they are a monolithic group. The objective of this study was to analyse the relationship between a farmer's class and the adversities they have faced as a result of the Rohingya crisis. For data collection, six focus groups were conducted throughout different regions in Teknaf and Ukhia, and two key persons working with host community members were interviewed. Research on neoliberalism and its effects on farming classes were used as a frame of reference, and theories regarding alienation by Shapan Adnan and differentiation by Atiur Rahman were used to analyse the data. The findings illustrated that not only did the farmers' class category play a role in the adversities they faced and the coping strategies they relied on, but it also played a role in enabling processes of differentiation and elite accumulation in the area. The findings also showed that there were some similarities between the effects of neoliberalism on peasant classes and that of the Rohingya crisis, including processes of class differentiation and indirect elite accumulation, even though the root causes of the two issues differed. The findings of this study can contribute to literature regarding the Rohingya crisis, peasant class structures, and the effects of refugee influxes on developing countries.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Whenever international forces have significantly affected agriculture in Bangladesh, socio-economic class has often been a strong determinant of how resulting adversities affected peasants and farmers. The neoliberal economic reforms and neoliberal development projects which have been implemented in Bangladesh over the last few decades help highlight how the adverse effects on agriculture resulting from international forces can not only reinforce rural socio-economic hierarchies but have differential effects on farmers based on their socioeconomic status as well.

Class-based effects on farmers can be observed with the neoliberal economic reforms carried out in Bangladesh around the 1980s, which were in part carried out to please international bodies such as the IMF and WB. The process of privatisation and subsidy reduction meant that agriculture became increasingly more expensive to carry out, with many small and medium farmers no longer being able to carry out cultivation at the same rate, often resorting to selling away their land (Rahman, 1986; Rahman and Rahman, 2021; Misra et al., 2020). Due to the reforms, small farmers were increasingly unable to afford agricultural inputs, machinery and land (Nuruzzaman, 2004; Quasem, 1986). Privatisation and subsidy reduction led to polarisation between the large and small farmers in terms of agricultural inputs, machinery, draft animals, land, and consequently general financial well-being, with middle farmer groups disintegrating (Bhaduri et al., 1986; Nuruzzaman, 2004; Misra et al., 2020; Quasem, 1986; Rahman, 1986;

Rahman, 1988; Sobhan, 2021; Rahman, 2021), which has led to a pattern of increase in the number of small farmers to this day (Rahman and Rahman, 2021). Additionally, large-scale farmers were often able to use the privatisation of farming inputs as a means to profit off of small-scale farmers, with their involvement in input trade (Nuruzzaaman, 2007). The suffering of small-scale farmers was far greater than that of large ones, who often even found ways to benefit from privatisation.

Many of the neo-liberal development projects implemented in Bangladesh, which were often the products of private multinational corporations and globalisation, have similarly caused adversities which were influenced by class-based factors. Export processing zones and economic zones are often built on the land belonging to indigenous farmers, small farmers and poor peasants, many of whom are forcibly displaced for the establishment of these zones with the use of violence, while elite groups financially benefit from their dispossession (Istiaq and Islam, 2006; Adnan, 2016). Developmental energy projects, including the Rampal powerplant, have also similarly led to the disproportionate dispossession of the land of small and marginal farmers, who are at times viewed as the easiest groups to displace (Roy, 2013; Gardner, 2018; Muhammad, 2021).

As is illustrated by the case of neoliberal reforms and neoliberal development processes, class seems to be a determinant factor for the adversities farmers have to cope with when they are forced to face extreme changes, with smaller and marginal farmers facing more critical problems compared to larger ones who either had the financial means to persevere through privatisation reforms or were not as vulnerable to land dispossession. It could be said that large farmers have

more means and privileges at hand to endure obstacles which could easily devastate small farmers. In this context, this dissertation aimed to look into whether or not the Rohingya Crisis has led to similar class-based adversities as farmers coped with the challenges they were faced with due to the mass influx of NGOs and refugees. While the adversities faced by farmers in Teknaf and Ukhia may be the result of a massive refugee influx rather than market reforms or energy projects, the case of the Rohingya crisis is still similar in the sense that it involves international forces changing agriculture by causing dispossession of land, a loss of natural resources and impoverishment (Olney et al., 2019; Quader et al., 2019; IRFC, 2020; IC Net, 2018). This dissertation has analysed whether or not there is a farming class variation in the adversities the farmers in Teknaf and Ukhia have been challenged with and the coping mechanisms they were forced to adopt while using the theories developed to analyse the effects of neoliberalism on agriculture as a framework and reference point.

In cohesion reports regarding the Rohingya crisis, one of the forms of host community livelihoods most frequently mentioned to be critically affected is agriculture (Olney et al., 2019; Quader et al., 2020; IRFC, 2020; IC Net, 2018). Although the dire effects on agriculture are brought up frequently in cohesion reports and journal articles, only a few lines are dedicated to this issue at most. The demographic traits of the affected farmers are not disclosed at all, and the problems they face due to the mass exodus are rarely discussed in detail. Farmers are treated as a monolithic group, and refugee crisis-induced agricultural problems, such as land loss, water scarcity, and pollution, are discussed as if they affect all farmers equally. Additionally, there is little mention of how local elites may be embedded in the struggles faced by farmers after the refugee influx.

The research on neoliberalism highlights how the numerous large-scale adversities which farmers have faced over the last few decades are often influenced by their positioning within social hierarchies present in rural society. This dissertation explores the effects of the Rohingya crisis on farmers in-depth and analyses how class plays a role in the adversities the farmers have faced in Ukhia and Teknaf¹. This study has also looked into how the area's elites are entangled in the agricultural issue resulting from the refugee crisis and what role they play within processes of dispossession.

1.2 Research Questions

In this context, this dissertation studies and analyses how a farmer's landholding class has played a role in the adversities they have faced due to the Rohingya crisis, along with the subsequent coping strategies they have adopted. The role played by the area's elites in processes of dispossession is additionally analysed. The dissertation has also utilised studies done on neoliberalism as a framework and has analysed whether or not class polarisation and indirect elite accumulation have also similarly unfolded in the aftermath of the Rohingya crisis.

The research questions of this thesis are:

- a) How has the Rohingya crisis affected farmers in Teknaf and Ukhia?
- b) How does the farmer's landholding class play a role in the adversities resulting from the Rohingya crisis?

¹ On its own, class is an important factor to consider as the political, economic and social capital a farmer possesses can drastically influence how they cope when their livelihood is threatened. The class factor is especially important for this specific case, because in the Teknaf Union, 28% of the farmers have less than 1.5 acres of land and 16% are landless according to prior studies before the crisis (IC Net, 2018). In the Ukhia region on the other hand, 55% of farmers have less than 1.5 acres and 16% are landless (IC Net, 2018). Presence of marginality and landlessness leaves the farmers in the region especially vulnerable to any threats on their livelihoods due to their marginal socio-economic status.

- c) Are the influences of the Rohingya crisis on the rural class structures and dynamics similar to that of neoliberalism?

1.3 Research Objectives

The research objectives of this thesis are:

- a) To explore the effects of the Rohingya crisis on host community farmers.
- b) To detect whether class plays a role in the issues faced by farmers resulting from the Rohingya crisis by studying how adversities and coping strategies varied between landholding classes, and how agents in Teknaf and Ukhia possessing comparatively more social-economic capital influenced agrarian adversities.
- c) To analyse whether or not there are similarities between the Rohingya crisis and the penetration of neoliberalism in terms of its effects on rural class structures and dynamics. This could include instances of polarisation and differentiation of agrarian classes or accumulation by dispossession.

1.4 Methodology

The overarching objective of this study is to analyse how farmers in Teknaf were affected by the Rohingya crisis and to discover how their socio-economic positioning affected the adversities they faced. The specific objective of this study is to discover the issues faced by farmers and to detect if the adversities they faced differed from that of other farming/landholding classes and whether or not rural elites had any influence on the challenges which farmers were met with as a result of the Rohingya crisis.

1.4.1 Study Approach

The research methods used in this study are qualitative in nature as the study mostly aims to explore the experiences and viewpoints of farmers as they cope with the adversities induced by the mass exodus, and qualitative methods are more well suited for research which centres on personal experiences and viewpoints (Flick, 2019). This study counts as exploratory research as the central issue of this study has not been studied in detail before (Saunders et al., 2012), which was also why qualitative research methods seemed more appropriate due to the thick description it provides (Dey, 2016). The qualitative methods used in this study for data collection include focus groups and key-person interviews. Although a specific set of themes and list of questions were covered in every interview, certain questions differed from one focus group to another, based on the nature of adversities faced, the location of the focus groups and the system of land tenureship, which made all focus groups and KPIs semi-structured in nature (Saunders et al., 2012).

1.4.2 Study Area

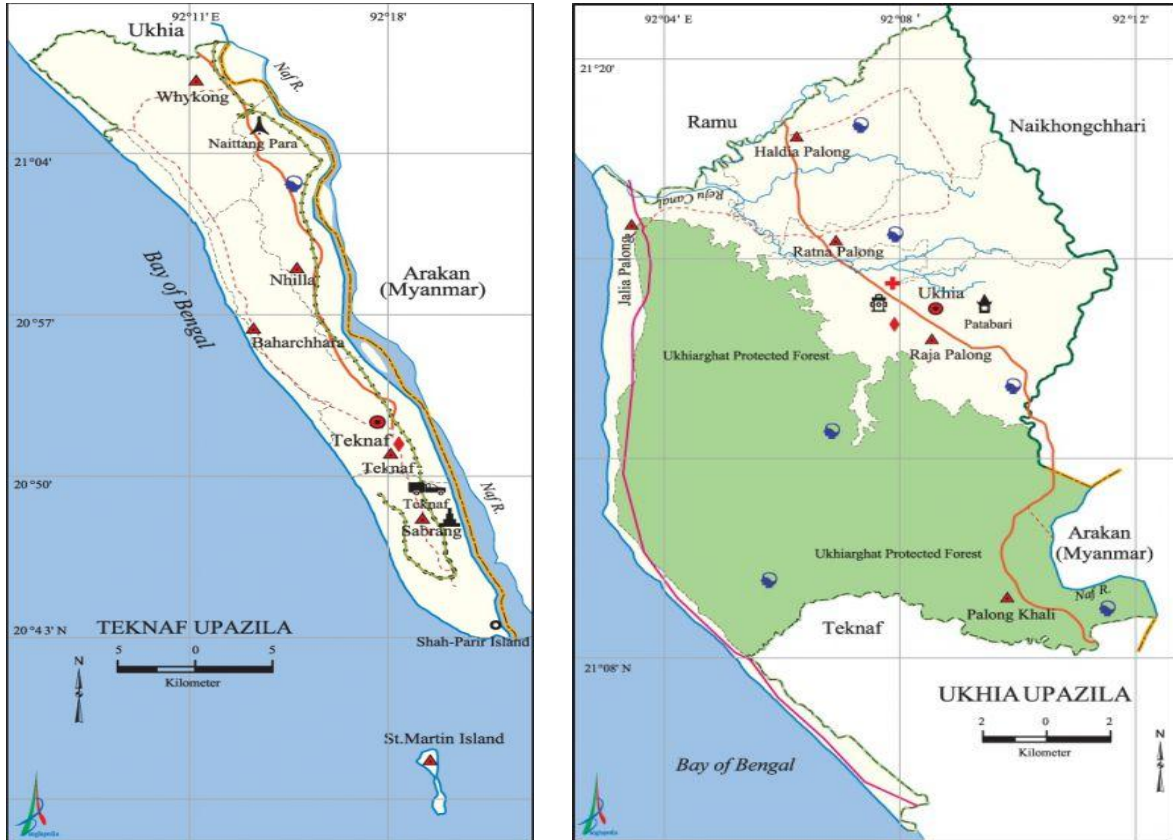
In August 2017, Myanmar authorities carried out systematic violence on the Rohingya community located in the Northern Rakhine State (Olney et al., 2019). The acts of genocide and violence has injured hundreds of Rohingya people and led to an unknown number of deaths, which resulted in over a million Rohingya people taking refuge in the various sub-districts of Cox's Bazar (Olney et al., 2019). Some sources estimate that the Rohingya population in Cox's Bazar goes up to 1.45 million people, with the Rohingya refugees living in 34 extremely congested camps (OCHA, 2022). Although a majority of the refugees have taken up residence in

the camps after the major exodus, the overall flow of Rohingya people to Bangladesh dates as far back as the 1970s (UNCHR, 2017).

This was the second time I visited Teknaf and Ukhia, with my first field trip mostly having to do with research related to deforestation. My first connection to the area resulted from my supervisor connecting me to an alumnus from BRAC University working for Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, who introduced me to a student who worked in Ukhia and knew various host community families. I built further connections along with my classmate who was also conducting research in the area, by contacting Dhaka-based journalists and development workers who either worked on Teknaf-based projects or knew people working in Teknaf. Contact with Dhaka-based journalists and development workers helped us get in touch with a journalist in the Teknaf area and two development workers working on a host community project in the region. The student, journalist and two development workers helped organise the focus groups.

This study incorporated focus groups consisting of farmers from five different locations in Teknaf (Teknaf Sadar, Sabrang, Lombaguna, Amtali, Mochoni) and one location in Ukhia (Ghonarpara). While two of these groups have been directly affected due to the establishment of Rohingya camps on their cultivation land (Ghonar Para and Mochoni), the farmers from the four other locations were not geographically as close to the refugee camps. Still, they faced a wide range of indirect effects stemming from the Rohingya crisis, including issues such as water scarcity, the loss of forested commons, and changes in agrarian tenancy rates. In terms of spatial coverage, the host community groups come from Nhila Union, Whykong Union, Sabrang Union and Teknaf Union in the Teknaf subdistrict, and Palangkhali Union in the Ukhia subdistrict.

Figure 1: Unions in Teknaf and Ukhia



The differences in geographical proximity to camps also meant that the different focus groups had varying amounts of exposure to both Rohingya refugees and the physical effects of the refugee camps. While the focus group members of Ghonar Para had their water resources fully contaminated by the waste from the camps, and live in a community where Rohingya people and Bengalis are enmeshed together, the daily exposure of other groups are significantly different in nature and quantity. For example, the farmers in Amtali would only be faced with Rohingya refugees when they went to carry out agroforestry in the hills and complained of deforestation drastically less than farmers in Mochoni who lived in camp adjacent areas.

1.4.3 Data Collection

This dissertation can be considered as an exploratory study as the objective of the research was to discover whether or not the socio economic positioning of a farmer had an influence in the problems they faced. Usually topics which are not studied in depth before are called exploratory studies (Saunders et al., 2012). As exploratory research usually concerns an under-researched problem, focus group discussions can be helpful as they help researcher's identify repeating patterns and trends in the data collected from different groups (Flick, 2019). The key person interviews helped provide insight on the prevalence and significance of the issues brought up in the focus group discussions, as the key persons had experience working with many different host community groups.

1.4.3.1 Focus group discussions

For this study, focus groups consisting of farmers from different socio-economic positions were especially helpful as it provided a mix of both the lived experiences of different farming classes and their observations regarding the adversities faced by farmers from classes different from their own. The balance of personal lived experiences and observations regarding the issues faced by other farming/peasant classes helped enhance the analysis process as it provided more depth to any patterns that showed up in the collected data while adding a sense of objectivity- which is one of the positive aspects of focus group discussions (FGDs) (Saunders et al., 2012).

The FGDs were conducted in person over the span of three days. The FGDs were held in a range of settings, with some occurring inside the home of respondents or their front yard, while others were held at small tea shops.

For this study, homogenous groups of small farmers and middle farmers were utilised for the FGD, along with one single group consisting of both middle and small farmers. The gender demographic for the study was mostly males, with only the Lombaguna group consisting purely of female agroforesters. The construction of focus groups also incorporated a variation of farmers based on ethnicity, proximity to refugee camps/settlements, and land holding form as these factors were believed to influence the type and nature of adversities faced by farmers.

Due to my limitations in access to farmers in Teknaf, the focus group samples were constructed with the help of a journalist I knew in the area, a university student, the two key persons who participated in the study, and a Brac University alumnus. The focus group participants seemed to be accustomed to taking part in host-community related surveys, which made it easier to collect data from them and also helped ensure that they knew when to differentiate between the effects of COVID-19 and global inflations, from that of the Rohingya crisis, as they seemed to be aware of making such distinctions from prior experience.

Table 1: Demographics of the focus group participants

Focus Group Location	Number of participants	Proximity to Camps	Farmer Class (Before Influx)	Ethnicity	Form of land-holding
Mochoni	5	Adjacent	Medium Farmers	Bengali-Muslim	Ownership
Ghonar Para	4	Adjacent	Small Farmers	Bengali-Muslim	Ownership
Amtali	4	Non-adjacent	Small Farmers	Chakma	Customary
Lombaguna	5	Non-adjacent	Small Farmers	Chakma	Customary
Teknaf Sadar	6	Non-adjacent	Small and Medium Farmers	Bengali-Muslim	Ownership and Tenancy
Sabrang	3	Non-adjacent	Small Farmers	Bengali-Muslim	Tenancy

The questions asked during the FGDs were informed by the secondary research done on the effects of the Rohingya crisis, and included questions regarding issues such as the loss of grazing and cultivation land, the barring of forested slopes and *jhum* along with questions regarding water access. The issues brought up in a FGD by respondents were also used as prompts in the consecutive FGDs, creating a snowballing effect of sorts in terms of questions asked. Farmers themselves would frequently focus on class as one of the major factors influencing agricultural adversities after the Rohingya crisis, not only as they discussed their own problems but in their articulations of the stories of fellow farmers as well, even when class-related prompts were avoided altogether. Although the questions and prompts in all groups followed specific themes, with some questions being standardised, a significant portion of the questions asked was specific to each focus group.

While a translator was present for all the focus groups, they mostly helped translate the dialects of elderly farmers, and the entirety of the focus group discussion in Lombaguna. Frequent or

ongoing translation was not required for the rest of the farmers. As the information from the majority of the respondents did not require continuous translation, language barriers were not too much of an obstacle to the flow of the FGDs.

Although it is acknowledged that ethnicity is a major factor that this study does not properly look into, the analysis of ethnicity-related factors was beyond the technical scope of the paper.

1.4.3.2 Key person interviews

Two development workers from the Centre for Disability and Development, a non-profit organisation aiding host community members were chosen as KPIs for this study. While one of them had experience working with various different host community groups in the area through fieldwork, the other had been working on-field with both host community members and Rohingya refugees since 2018. Both individuals seemed to hold an acquaintanceship with focus group members.

The key person interviewees were asked about their opinions on some of the core issues brought up during the FGDs, including the problems with deforestation, water scarcity and the threat felt by host community members due to ARSA members. A majority of the discussions during these interviews centred around how land issues and land dispossession usually played out during the mass exodus, and how agents in the situation such as the Camp In Charge and local police dealt with it. Lastly, they were asked about their opinions on the general socio-economic hierarchy present in Teknaf, and how they would locate some of the host community members perceived to be exploiting the farmers within this hierarchy. While some of these interviews were formal

scheduled ones, others were informal discussions during the commute to the focus groups which took an interview-like turn.

In short, the KPIs helped identify the significance and prevalence of the problems brought up during focus group discussions (Flick,2019). They also helped provide an uninvolved, outsider insight on the broader class and power structures within which host community members were embedded, along with the agents these farmers had conflicts with including CiCs and market committee members.

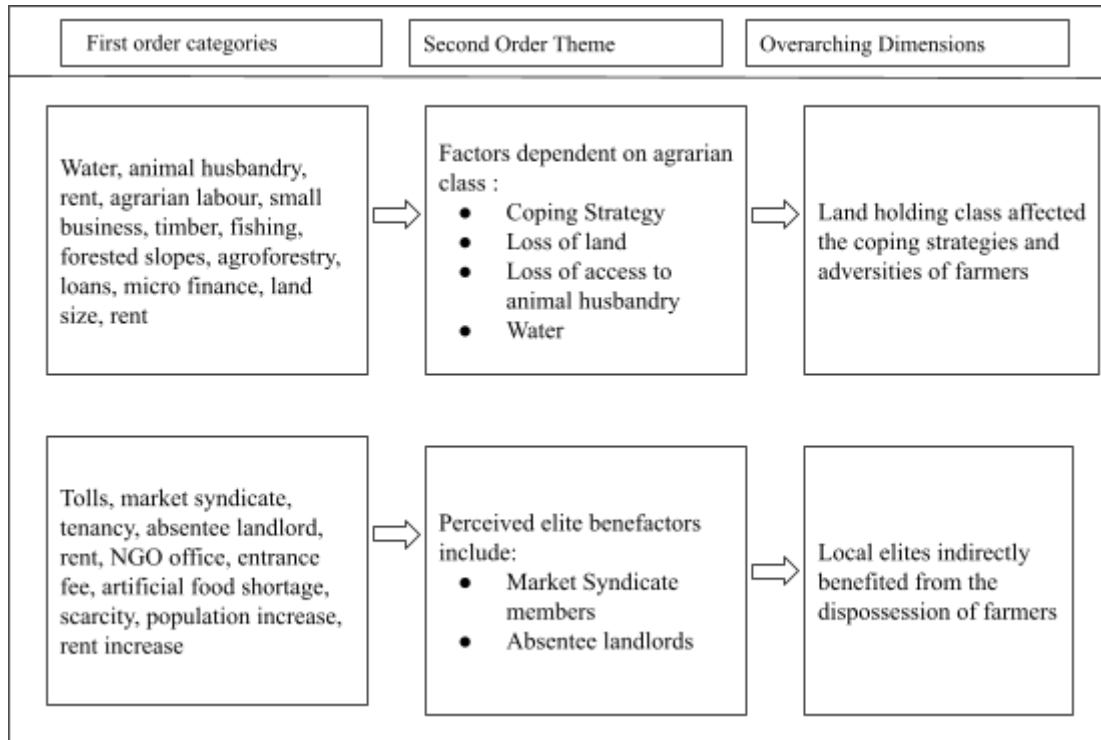
1.4.4 Data Analysis

The focus group discussions for this study were recorded after permission was taken from the farmers and consent forms were filled up. While most of the KPI interviews and follow-up questions were recorded, some were shared through email or transcribed directly from phone calls. All the information collected on the field was first translated and transcribed. Some of the farmers were called on the phone for follow up questions, although intermediaries had to be contacted to help aid the follow-up process as well.

After this, the information was coded for class-based analysis. The first phase of manual coding colour coded for all mentions of adversities and coping mechanisms which seemed to be affiliated with class. The second order of coding differentiated between factors and keywords which were associated with agrarian class (coping strategies, loss of land, loss of access to animal husbandry, water) from those associated with non-agrarian elites (market syndicates, absentee landlords). Finally, two themes were developed, one regarding the indirect benefits

local elites received from land dispossession and the other regarding differences in adversities faced by agrarian classes.

Figure 2: Process of qualitative analysis of class factors



For the comparison of coping strategies in specific cases, the groups with the highest amount of similarities were singled out to help ensure that most differential factors between the groups were accounted for, other than their class positioning. This singled out Mochoni and Ghonar Para as one pair, along with Amtali and Lombaguna as another, as the nature of experienced adversities and the focus groups' proximity to camps were similar enough to help me analyse how differences in socio-economic positioning could aid coping strategies.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The theories used for this dissertation were not only chosen based on the insights they provide about the class based struggles faced by peasants but also because they give insight into how elite groups can take advantage of peasant classes and accumulate from their struggles.

The first theory used is that of differentiation and polarisation. Although this theory was originally formulated by Lenin, Atiur Rahman's application of it in the rural Bangladeshi context is used to supplement Lenin's work for this dissertation as this has helped add context-specific insights. The second theory used is accumulation by dispossession (ABD), which was originally formulated by Harvey (2013). Harvey's theory has been supplemented by Shapan Adnan's framework of alienation, which uses ABD as its base (2016).

In cohesion, these two theories together have helped illustrate the relationship between the farmer's struggles and socio-economic class in Teknaf, and have helped situate small and marginal farmers in comparison to both large (rich) farmers and local elites.

1.5.1 Concentration, differentiation and polarisation

The first theory this dissertation has used is Lenin's theory of differentiation, along with Atiur Rahman's application of it in the Bangladesh context. According to Lenin, the penetration of capitalist forces into rural agriculture leads to increasing differentiation of the prosperous peasantry class consisting of large, commercial farmers and the rural proletariat which consists of hired agrarian labourers with little to no land holding or draft animals (Rahman, 1986).

Differentiation happens at the cost of the crumbling of the middle peasantry. The majority of peasants start to become a part of the rural proletariat class during the process of differentiation, as wealth, property and the mode of production would concentrate around the prosperous peasantry. A simple way to explain this would be to say , the rich rural peasants would become richer, and the poor rural peasants would become poorer as capitalistic forces infiltrated rural agriculture.

Atiur Rahman has formulated a version of differentiation for its application in rural Bangladesh in his work *Peasants and Classes* (1986), summarised as follows according to the relevancy for this study:

1. The concentration in the ownership of the means of production (especially land) would become more unequal over time, becoming concentrated amongst large/rich farmers.
2. Differences and concentration of income and expenditure, food consumption, standard of living, market participation, material elements of production, draft animals and machinery would also become more unequal between large farmers and small/marginal farmers. The medium farmer base would start to disintegrate as a result of the differentiation.
3. Impoverishment would increase. Small and marginal farmers would become dispossessed
4. There would be a resumption of operated land by the large scale/rich farmers from the tenants.

Concentration and polarisation of land ownership and draft animals is focused on in this paper. As the research is exploratory in nature, quantitative methods have not been applied to the study of differentiation, even though quantitative methods are usually employed in its analysis. Instead it is analysed whether or not the experiences, observations and the stories of farmers indicate that the Rohingya crisis has helped enable the processes and conditions which may result in and/or is associated with differentiation. Additionally, general signs of increased experiences of impoverishment amongst smaller farmers as a result of the Rohingya crisis was also taken into account.

1.5.2 Alienation and accumulation by dispossession

Harvey's notion of accumulation by dispossession (ABD) is one of the major existing theoretical approaches to land alienation. Harvey's formulation of ABD draws from Marx's construct of primitive accumulation while adapting it to the context of neoliberal globalisation (Adnan, 2016). The concept focuses on the negative effects of various neoliberal policies, including structural adjustment programmes, which often result from the imposition of devaluation on vulnerable countries by international bodies such as the WB and IMF. Neoliberal globalisation not only leads to the privatisation and commodisation of resources which lead to drastic price reductions of assets for the sake of the 'profitable circulation of capital', but it also leads to the large-scale dispossession of land, resources and wealth of voiceless groups which help build the base for the accumulation of wealth for private corporations (Harvey, 2013).

Table 2: Summary of land appropriation types proposed by Adnan

Use of Force/Directness	Direct	Indirect
Forced	1)Direct-Forced: Even when overt violence is not used, concerned laws, policies and commands which lead to dispossession are backed by the coercive apparatus of the state, powerful agencies and individuals.	3)Indirect-Forced: This category applies to mechanisms of land appropriation, which are indirect but are supplemented with public or private force. Nevertheless, the direct objective of this category is not to appropriate land for capitalistic needs, even though indirect accumulation occurs.
Unforced	2)Direct-Unforced:Mechanisms in this category incorporate the direct appropriation of land without the use of force or violence. Informal mediation, negotiations, persuasion, temptation, fraud and forgery is used.	4)Indirect-Unforced: This category of mechanisms of land appropriation or dispossession neither involve the use of force nor is it directly concerned with appropriating or grabbing land for capitalist accumulation as an objective. The land which is dispossessed does not directly have to be sold or given to elites. Regardless, it still leads to the eventual outcome of dispossession of land for peasants and indirect accumulation for some elite groups.

Shapan Adnan elaborates on Harvey’s formulation of ABD by applying it to patterns of land alienation found in South Asia. By focusing on the form of extra-economic coercion used leading to the dispossession of land, he formulations four types of land alienation. This includes: i)Direct-Forced ii)Direct- Unforced iii) Indirect-Forced, iv) Indirect-Unforced (Adnan, 2016).This paper used indirect-unforced alienation and indirect-forced alienation in its analysis.

1.6 Conceptual Framework

This portion indicates how farmer class groupings have been established, and elaborates on the definitions of some of the different types of tenancy and farming techniques discussed in this dissertation.

1.6.1 Farmer categories and landowning classes

As Atiur Rahman uses the categories of small, medium and large farmers in his application of the differentiation theory to Bangladesh (1986), the same categories are used in this dissertation when referring to different classes of farmers.

To add generalisability to this dissertation in the context of Bangladesh, the definitional category for farmers by their land holding is based on the categorisation used by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics for agricultural census (BBS, 1997), which is frequently used to differentiate farming classes and groups.

The analysis on farmer class differentiation has utilised the definitional categories stated below, based on the land holding of these groups before the mass exodus. Landholding accounts for both rented and owned land in the study. Mentions of farmer, agrarian, or land holding class hence refer to differences in land holding as specified below.

Table 3: Classification of farmers according to landholding, as formulated by BBS

Farmer Category	Land holding of farmer
Large Farmers	Above 3.0 hectares
Medium Farmers	Between 1.0 and 3.0 hectares
Small Farmer	Between 0.2 and 1.0 hectare
Marginal Farmer	Between 0.02 and 0.2 hectare
Landless Farmers	Below 0.02 hectares

While the dissertation does explore the condition of medium and small farmers, larger farmers were difficult to incorporate due to their rarity in the Teknaf area. As mentioned above, large scale farmers cultivate and carry out agriculture in land above 3.0 hectares. According to both the KPI and the respondent farmers, in most cases land margins of 3.0 hectares and above were owned by absentee landlords with lineage based ties to Teknaf, who rent out their land to small or medium farmers and NGOs through advanced cash payments, rather than choosing to carry out commercial or large scale agriculture in it. Tenants of these absentee landlords included in this study assured their relationship was purely monetary, rather than one based on sharecropping at any scale. If they had chosen to carry out cultivation in the entirety of their land, these absentee landlords would have taken up the category of large farmers of the area. The only commercial farming mentioned during focus groups was carried out in salt farming, which was mostly conducted by Dhaka-based entities who were reported to be detached from the society and community in Teknaf altogether, with very little affiliation to the locality in any extra-economic way.

Due to this near-absence of large-scale Teknaf-based farmers, this group could not be incorporated in the differentiation study, and the non-agrarian large land-holding class was used to substitute the group when differentiation was analysed. For this study, absentee landlords, who take up a significant portion of individuals owning more than 3 hectares of land, refers to any individual who rents out their owned land in rural Teknaf on a cash basis, while personally residing in either Cox Bazar or Chittagong city.

1.6.2 Types of farming and land tenancy systems

In this section, some of the definitions of farming and tenancy terms are specifically defined as they can have nuances in definition based on the location of a study area, and the traditional practices present in it.

Homegarden Agroforestry/ Homestead forests: Home garden agroforestry, or homestead forests refers to the cultivation of small plots of forest land where a mix of perennial and annual trees, crops and livestock are raised or grown. While this form of agroforestry was simply referred to as "home gardens" by respondents, as is often the case colloquially in Bangladesh (Khan and Sidduiqi, 2008), home gardens have been referred to as homestead forests or homegarden agroforestry for the sake of generalisability in this study.

Jhum: *Jhum*, or shift and burn agriculture is a cropping practice during which natural vegetation in a plot of land is cleared and burned during the dry season and the land is again dibble sown during early monsoon (Brammer, 2000). After a couple of crop seasons, the land is usually abandoned to help with natural vegetation regeneration (Brammer, 2000). This general definition of *jhum* has been used in this paper, as the Chakma farmers themselves admit that some of the more specific aspects of the practice have been changed in recent generations.

1.7 Significance of the Research

Firstly, this research can help add a more in-depth understanding of the state of agriculture in Teknaf and Ukhia after the mass exodus, a form of livelihood most commonly brought up in cohesion reports and environmental journal articles regarding the Rohingya crisis but not

discussed in depth. Existing literature regarding the effects on farmers has a tendency to avoid the contextual factors which influence the adversities faced by farmers, as most of the literature in which their adversities are discussed are either heavily ecological in nature or are brief cohesion reports in which their problems are only mentioned in a summarised fashion. The study helps place farmers within their own social, cultural, geographical and class-based contexts, which brings out various nuances in their struggles.

Secondly, it can add to literature regarding peasant classes as it helps illustrate how a relatively less common threat such as a mass refugee exodus can significantly threaten the wellbeing and financial conditions of farmers and peasants, based on their agrarian class. Although there is research on how environmental problems, market reforms and neoliberal projects may differentially affect peasants and farmers based on their class, the literature regarding the effects of a refugee crisis on host community farmers along class lines is limited.

Lastly, this research can help add to literature and spheres of knowledge regarding refugee and humanitarian crises in general, as it shows how they may play out in developing countries which are still to a large extent dependent on agriculture. The effects of a refugee crisis on host community members may not only be different based on the level of economic development of a country, but may also be influenced by whether or not the region is dependent more on industries, pastoralism or agriculture. The unique characteristics of a country such as Bangladesh which is more dependent on agriculture may result in very differential host community adversities compared to the problems faced by economically developed, urban regions which host large refugee populations.

In addition, the findings of this study can help inform policies regarding host communities in developing countries and its farmers, when they are faced with refugee crises.

1.8 Organisation of the Study

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 of the thesis has illustrated the historical connections between class and the adversities faced by farmers to show the possible ways in which farming class may play a role in the effects of the Rohingya crisis on agriculture in Teknaf and Ukhia. Chapter 1 has also included the research questions and objectives, the methodologies used in the study, the area of the study, followed by the theoretical and conceptual frameworks used, and the significance of the research. The literature review has been included in Chapter 2, where the class-based adversities faced by farmers as a result of neoliberal reforms and development projects have been illustrated, and the specific historical phenomena which were taken into consideration during analysis have been indicated. The gap in research has also been emphasised in Chapter 2. Chapter 3, the findings chapter, has at first highlighted the various spheres of agriculture affected. This is followed by a deeper look into the class factor, with the findings chapter showcasing the differences between small and medium farmers in their experiences with the adverse effects of the Rohingya crisis, along with the ways in which the elites of the area played a role in and/or benefited from the problems they faced. The findings of Chapter 3 are influenced by the literature in Chapter 2 as the information from it was used to formulate interview questions. The findings chapter is followed by Chapter 4 which is the discussion chapter, which has taken into consideration the literature review and theoretical frameworks to provide an analysis of how the farmer's socioeconomic positioning within the

agrarian hierarchy and broader rural hierarchy in Teknaf and Ukhia shaped their experiences with the Rohingya crisis compared to other farmers and local elites. Lastly, Chapter 5 summarised the findings, put forward some policy recommendations based on the findings and analysis, indicated the limitations of the study and articulated possible scopes for further research.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although in most NGO reports, agriculture was frequently mentioned to be one of the livelihoods most significantly affected by the Rohingya crisis, the socio-economic identity of the farmers are often mystified and the problems of the farmers are often addressed as if they are a monolithic group. While farmers as a group may have a similar form of livelihood, it can be expected that the issues they face resulting from the Rohingya crisis and the influx of refugees and NGOs may be exacerbated or eased as a result of their socio-economic positioning, as has often been the case when Bangladeshi farmers were negatively affected in the past as a result of the penetration of capitalism and due to neoliberal development. Such patterns make it crucial to look into the class factor of the issue as it can help offer a nuanced look into the adversities farmers face and how they cope with them.

This dissertation has hence tackled the research gap of the class factor in the issues faced by the farmers in Teknaf and Ukhia as a result of the Rohingya crisis. This dissertation has analysed the ways in which class could have impacted the hardships faced by farmers by using the case of neoliberal reforms and development as a reference point. Neoliberal reforms and neoliberal development projects in Bangladesh has lead to impoverishment for small farmers and has also caused dispossession of agricultural land and a loss of the commons for farmers, (Rahman, 2000; Rahman, 2021; Adnan, 2016; Sobhan, 2021; Tisdell, 2003; Istiak and Islam, 2006), similar to what has happened in Teknaf with the influx of refugees and NGOs (Olney et al., 2019; Quader et al., 2020; IRFC, 2020; IC Net, 2018; Alsaafin, 2018).

Since secondary sources already point towards some similarities in the adversities faced by farmers as a result of the Rohingya crisis and the effect of neoliberalism, the patterns detected in the studies that look into the class factor of the problems faced by peasants over the last few decades, especially as a result of penetration of neoliberalism and neoliberal development, could provide a reference point if the class factor of the agriculture issue in Teknaf and Ukhia is to be studied. Rather than attempting to equate neoliberalism or free market capitalism with a genocide related humanitarian crisis, this study simply aims to utilise the patterns and theories used to analyse the class differences present in peasant adversities, a great majority of which has resulted from studies centering around neo-liberal critique.

A look into the ways in which socio-economic class has been a crucial factor in the issues faced by farmers as a result of various neoliberal processes can also help provide a general history of the link between the socio-economic standings of farmers and the hardships they have faced over time.

2.1 Neoliberal reforms, polarisation and differentiation of peasant classes

The tendency of threats to agriculture having a class-based factor can be detected as early as the period of initial neo-liberal reforms in Bangladesh.

In the 1980s GoB signed various structural adjustment programs and agrarian reforms to promote the nation's industrialisation and wean off the dependence it had on agriculture for its economic growth (Misra et al., 2020). These reforms polarised the peasant classes while increasing the number of households taking up smallholder farming for its survival (Bhaduri et

al., 1986; Rahman, 1986; Rahman, 2021). The SAF loan initiatives established by the IMF in 1986 and the adjustment programs which followed had a few conditionalities, most of which revolved around the goal of privatising state owned enterprises (Rahman, 2002; Orr, 2012). The Government of Bangladesh subsequently downsized the operations of state owned enterprises devoted to delivering agricultural inputs to farmers and also reduced agricultural subsidies in the pursuit of structural adjustment loans (Misra et al., 2020).

During the pre-reform era, the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) had the mandate to supply agro-machinery and other inputs to farmers at subsidised prices at fixed rates through the Thana Sales Centres (TSCs) and Thana Central Cooperative Associations (TCAAS) (Istiak and Islam, 2006; Misra et al., 2020). The TSC and TCCAs were both abolished and the importing and distribution of machinery, fertilisers and pesticides all started to become massively privatised during the reform era, with businessmen controlling the import and distribution of these products (Rahman, 2021). Additionally, the introduction of HYV and hybrid seeds for agriculture increased agriculture expenses as these seeds usually require more intense use of pesticides, fertilisers and agro machinery (Istiak and Islam, 2006). These factors which were at the base of free-market reforms made farming and crop production increasingly more expensive to carry out, which was disproportionately critical for small and marginal farmers.

Big landowners and farmers along with businessmen who were involved in the trade of inputs were able to exploit smaller farmers as a result of neo liberal reforms, especially during the growing and harvesting seasons which encouraged the differentiation between farming classes to become steeper (Nuruzzaaman, 2004; Quasem, 1986). A study by Quasem in 1986 found that as

the privatisation reforms were carried out, bigger land owners who were already known to specialise in commodity trades took the reforms as a chance to capitalise on the fertiliser and pesticide trade (Quasem, 1986). Nuruzzaman on the other hand found that fertiliser dealers and traders were known to create artificial crises of fertilisers and increase the price by many times over the actual price, especially when farmers need it the most, with small farmers subsequently being forced to buy fertiliser at whatever cost (Nuruzzaman, 2004). Misra et al., (2021) also discusses how in the first few decades of the reforms, small scale farmers could no longer afford inputs and machinery as per their needs due to the lack of subsidies and a lack of government regulation of machinery and input prices, which was also supported in a study by Rahman (2000).

Additionally, differentiation and polarisation of peasant and farmer classes as a result of neoliberal reforms was also enabled by the tendency of small farmers to lose out on the competitive edge which bigger and mid level farmers gain from privatisation. For example, the liberalisation of irrigation and agro machinery imports had made multiple types of generators and power tillers available only to large and middle farmers, whereas small and marginal farmers were unable to afford it (Nuruzzaman, 2004). During the sale of produce, marginal farmers yet again face inequalities as they can be more vulnerable to market forces as the rural farming poor are usually at the lowest end of the production and marketing chain, which leaves them more vulnerable to market induced shocks, monopsonies and rent extraction from those above them in the market chain, and they also face extortion from non-market forces such as corrupt officials, political bosses and local criminals (Sobhan, 2021) As they lack economic, political and social capital, they are more vulnerable to such forms of extortion compared to farmers possessing

higher amounts of socioeconomic capital (Sobhan, 2021). The general privatisation and extension of property rights also lead to the poor losing access to the commons and the free natural resources they previously depended on, including wayside fodder and water from public tanks (Tisdell, 2003), the loss of which may have more detrimental effects on those who do not have the means to pay for such resources compared to those who can continue to afford it.

To put it shortly, agriculture became too expensive to carry out at the same rate for many small farmers as neoliberal market forces, privatisation and capitalist penetrations started to influence agriculture in rural Bangladesh. The end result was that there was an increasing concentration and differentiation in the possession of agricultural land, inputs, draught animals, machinery and general wealth between large-scale farmers and small-scale ones (Nuruzzaman, 2004; Misra et al., 2020; Quasem, 1986; Rahman, 1986; Sobhan, 2021), along with an increase in smallholder farms in general (Rahman, 2000; Rahman and Rahman, 2021). Hence, we see that the structural adjustment programs instilled by the WB and IMF led to neoliberal reforms in agriculture, which caused polarisation of the peasant classes and reinforced hierarchies between large-scale landowners and farmers and the small ones, while the middle farmer class started to disintegrate (Sobhan, 2021; Rahman, 2021). The extent of the losses faced by farmers were also influenced by their agrarian class.

This dissertation analyses whether or not the possible impoverishment of farmers and the hardships they have faced as a result of the major exodus has resulted in polarisation and differentiation patterns similar to what was found to be a result of neoliberal market reforms, with the gap between small and large farmers getting wider.

2.2 Neoliberal development projects and land dispossession

While neo-liberal globalisation did have its effects on small farmers due to the reforms it indirectly brought on to the agriculture sector as a whole, another way in which neoliberal globalisation has affected Bangladeshi farmers is through neoliberal development projects and the establishment of export processing zones and energy projects. Similar to neoliberal market reforms, neoliberal development processes have possessed a tendency to reinforce rural class hierarchies as it has resulted in the deprivation of various small farmers and the rural poor, while at times benefiting the elites of the locality affected.

Shapan Adnan discusses how in the era of neo-liberal globalisation, land is often commodified, acquired by the state (often from those who are voiceless) and then supplied to private corporations and elite groups (Adnan, 2016). At times this land acquisition is the result of direct objectives to appropriate the land, backed up by coercive forces exerted by the state or private corporations, at times in order to accommodate the interests of MNCs (Adnan, 2016). Economic enclaves such as Export Processing Zones, Shrimp Zones, and economic zones often require land acquisition for its establishment, and this leads to the dispossession of land from small and marginal farmers who do not have much control of their land in the face of powerful forces (Adnan, 2016). These economic enclaves are usually aimed at promoting exports and attracting foreign direct investment (Adnan, 2016).

At times, it is the poorest and most marginalised farmers of a region who are more disproportionately dispossessed. In the Chittagong hill tracts for example, the state is known to acquire the private and common lands of indigenous peoples so that the land can be leased to

absentee Bangladeshi elite groups for their commercial plantations (Adnan, 2016). In the Bankra village in Shatkhira, a survey supported that for the establishment of shrimp cultivation, it was mainly the small and marginal farmers in the area who had lost their agricultural land which was previously used for rice cultivation (Istiak and Islam, 2006). The Rampal power station, a coal fired power plant which is under Indian and Bangladeshi ownership has displaced 2,200 families of their arable land, a majority of which were marginal farmers and poor villagers, with some belonging to lower caste Hindu groups (Khan, 2020; Muhammad, 2021; Roy, 2013). Similarly, when it came to the Bibiyana gasfield in Habiganj which was a project by Chevron, it was disproportionately poor farmers, agricultural labourers and sharecroppers who lost their agrarian livelihood due to gas extraction, with the benefits from Chevron's community project which was designed to ease the transition for the dispossessed only being distributed amongst elites (Gardner, 2018)

The cases of the Bibiyana gas field, Rampal power station, the shrimp export zones, and the timber trade and plantations, all show patterns of accumulation by dispossession in which poor farmers are dispossessed of their land and/or livelihood while the elites of the region, or even the elites at a more global scale (as is the case of export zones) benefit from it. In these cases, the poorer and comparatively more marginal farmers of a region were the ones dispossessed. This study has also attempted to analyse whether or not the nature of the dispossession of tenant or land-owning farmers has any class-based implications, be it on the type of farmers who were more likely to be displaced, the ways in which local elites may have played a role in this loss, or on the coping mechanisms adopted by farmers as a result of dispossession.

2.3 The Rohingya crisis and agricultural adversities

The pre-existing literature on the effects of the refugee influx in Teknaf and Ukhia on agriculture and farmers is quite limited even though it is frequently mentioned to be heavily affected. Furthermore, the class demography of the farmers affected are omitted altogether in reports and journal articles. At most, only a few lines are usually dedicated to the effects on agriculture in journal articles, NGO and cohesion reports, which gives readers a vague idea about how farmers in Teknaf have been affected by the Rohingya crisis and who these farmers *really* are. While only one report on host community members by IC Net addresses the class factor indirectly by mentioning that landlessness and marginal land ownership is common for farmers in Teknaf and Ukhia, it does not mention whether their socioeconomic positioning plays a role in their hardships resulting from the mass exodus (IC Net, 2018).

One of the most urgent issues identified by the host community members according to a survey conducted by IRFC was that there was a decline in income sources and employment as a result of the loss of agricultural land (IRFC, 2020). The accommodation of over a million Rohingya refugees understandably took a toll on agriculture. Quader et al s work supports the work of IRFC as it states that agricultural land was encroached on and at times destroyed due to the establishment of refugee camps (Quader at al., 2020). In addition to crop fields, the land used for the seasonal cultivation of vegetables was also reported to have been lost to the installation of refugee camps (IC Net, 2018).

The host community members of Teknaf not only carry out agriculture in clear flat lands, but to different extents they additionally utilise hilly forested slopes for agriculture and animal husbandry. The refugee influx has reduced the access host community members had to forest lands, along with the agricultural and subsistence practices they could carry out in it. Existing literature also indicated that although local populations could previously access government forests for firewood, animal grazing and small-scale farming, the access to government forests were barred as a result of the large-scale deforestation and establishment of camps (Olney et al., 2019; Mukul et al., 2019). The customary practice of Jhum which was allowed previously was banned by forestry officials as a result of the extensive forest land destruction induced by the refugee influx (Quader et al., 2020).

Other than forests, another natural resource host community members have lost proper access to is water. The installation of thousands of tubewells to accommodate the water needs of the refugee population has made many irrigation pumps used for agriculture dysfunctional due to the high reduction of underground water levels, and in some regions the water from natural water sources have either been polluted due to waste from camp settlements or pumped away for settlement use (Olney et al., 2019; IC Net, 2018; OXFAM, 2019 ;Grossenbacher, 2020; Alam, 2018; IRFC, 2020). This may have detrimental effects on agriculture as water is one of the most important resources required for crop cultivation.

In general there has also been a doubling of commodity prices, increasing levels of theft, and drastic changes in the labour market leading to critical reductions in casual labour wages as a

result of both surplus labour and the low wage rates set by Rohingya workers (Alsaafin, 2018; Olney et al., 2019; OXFAM, 2019 ; IRFC, 2020) all of which may have implications for farmers.

As evident, there is not much detail about who these affected farmers really are, and what farmer or peasant class they belong to- even though IC net has specified that the farmers of Teknaf and Ukhia are more likely to be marginal land holders or landless altogether. Most of the effects of the Rohingya crisis on agriculture are mentioned quite vaguely, in a way which tends to treat the entire farming population to be a monolith without stratifications amongst themselves. Class may be a crucial factor in how farmers are affected, which has historically been the case, as has been illustrated by existing literature regarding neoliberalism.

2.4 Unexplored research

As illustrated above, when the adversities faced by farmers are brought up, they are usually discussed in a way which treats all farmers as a monolithic, homogenous group. Although the loss of access to grazing land, forested slopes and water, along with the encroachment of cultivation fields by refugee settlements are mentioned, all of which may affect farmers, they are only discussed at a very surface level without nuance (Alsaafin, 2018; Olney et al., 2019; OXFAM, 2019 ; IRFC, 2020; Mukul et al., 2019; Quader at al., 2020).

The lack of detail about the farmers affected may connote to readers that regardless of their socio-economic positioning, all farmers are equally likely to face the problems brought on by the Rohingya crisis in a homogenous manner. However, past work on neoliberalism does show how the extent to which adversities may affect a farmer, and the coping mechanisms farmers adopt

when any obstacles threaten agriculture as a whole, be it an energy project or market reforms, can be heavily influenced by their landholding/peasant class.

Even the problems faced by farmers which are vaguely described in NGO, INGO and ecological reports may have differential effects on farmers, especially when it comes to the loss of natural resources, forested commons and cultivable land- the loss of which may have a heavier impact on the financial wellbeing of small farmers compared to larger ones. Pre-existing literature shows that patterns of polarisation and differentiation between farming classes, and the nature of land dispossession could be important points of class based analysis, and this has been taken into consideration when the loss of resources and cultivation land resulting from the Rohingya crisis is studied

With all this in consideration, this paper addresses the research gap of class when it comes to agricultural issues in Teknaf and Ukhia as a result of the Rohingya Crisis. The study explores how adversities such as the barring of forested commons, encroachment of cultivation land, loss of access to water, general changes in labour wages and price hikes, and the mass influx of both refugees and NGOs have had differential effects on farmers based on class, while using existing literature regarding neoliberalism and peasant classes as a reference point and framework. The study has also looked into whether or not the elites of the area are entangled in the agricultural issue and what role they play within processes of dispossession.

Chapter 3

FINDINGS

To illustrate the class dimensions of the effects of the Rohingya crisis on farmers, focus group discussions were conducted on small and middle farmers from six different regions of Teknaf. Two of these regions were adjacent to the camps (Mochoni village and Ghonar Para) and the rest were further away. Nevertheless, the agriculture of all regions included in this study were affected to different extents by the Rohingya crisis. While the focus groups in Mochoni Village and Teknaf Sadar included medium farmers, the focus groups in all other regions mostly contained small farmers. The experience of the farmers are highlighted in the findings portion of this dissertation. KPIs were also conducted on two individuals who worked for an NGO assisting the host community and were well-acquainted with the farmers in the area. The insights from the two KPIs have primarily been used to fill in information gaps and add more depth to the analysis portions of the dissertation as they were able to provide insight on the prevalence of the adversities reported in the focus groups.

The first findings chapter provides a broad overview of the adversities faced by the farmers in the Teknaf region as a result of the Rohingya crisis. The adversities mentioned most frequently across focus groups are briefly highlighted in the first subchapter as well. The second sub-chapter looks into the changes in the relationships of the farmers with their land as a result of the mass exodus, with a focus on the groups who have been dispossessed of their agricultural land due to camp expansion, and the ones who would heavily depend on the now inaccessible forests. The third sub-chapter illustrates the ways in which farmers themselves articulated the

class aspect in the adversities they had faced, with a look into how the social-positioning of various rural agents and the farmers themselves played a role in the adversities experienced they faced.

3.1 Effects on farmers

The aim of this subchapter is to provide a brief overview of the adversities which the farmers have reported that they experience as a result of the Rohingya crisis. While some of these adversities have a direct effect on agriculture, such as the dispossession of arable land for the establishment of refugee camps, the others have a more indirect effect on agriculture, such as the loss of secondary sources of income.

Table 4: Overview of Rohingya crisis induced adversities associated with agriculture

Adversities associated with the Rohingya crisis	Location of focus groups affected
Dispossession of arable land due to establishment of refugee camps	Ghonar Para, Mochoni
Loss of access to agroforestry / customary land	Amtali, Lombaguna, Teknaf Sadar, Mochoni,
Loss of access to grazing land	Amtali, Lombaguna, Teknaf Sadar, Mochoni, Ghonar Para
Jhum heavily regulated /barred	Amtali, Lombaguna
Inflation of agricultural tenancy rent	Amtali, Teknaf Sadar, Sabrang, Ghonar Para
Decrease in wage rate of casual labour	Amtali, Lombaguna
Increase in wage rate of casual labour	Teknaf Sadar, Sabrang
Reduction of underground water shed levels	Lombaguna, Sabrang
Loss of accessible tubewells/waterbodies	Ghonar Para, Lombaguna
Contamination of water bodies	Ghonar Para
Loss of access to fishing (secondary income)	Teknaf Sadar, Mochoni,
Loss of access to timber trade (secondary income)	Teknaf Sadar, Mochoni, Lombaguna, Amtali

3.1.1 Land-related issues

There have been both direct and indirect factors resulting from the Rohingya crisis which has affected the relationship which farmers in Teknaf and Ukhia have with their land.

In Mochoni village and Ghonar Para, the farmers in the focus groups were dispossessed of most of their agricultural land due to the establishment and expansion of Nobindito Camp and Camp-19 respectively. They only possess enough land for their housing at present.

In Amtali and Lombaguna, where the Chakma focus groups were located, agroforestry and animal husbandry has been more or less put to a halt. *Jhum* to various extents has been barred, and the homestead forests have become inaccessible. The mass deforestation, camp establishments in forest land, the excessive forestry official patrolling due to deforestation, and the presence of terrorist groups- all resulting from the Rohingya crisis has had a strong effect on agroforestry. The Chakma farmers feel that their customary access to the forests has been destroyed by the Rohingya people.

In Teknaf Sadar and Sabrang, farmers associate a rise in land rent prices with the influx of NGOs and NGO establishments. Many farmers have downscaled the amount of land they cultivate as they can no longer afford to rent the same amount of land. Middle farmers have had to reduce the amount of inherited land in which they choose to carry out cultivation as a chain of price hikes and adversities which initially started after the Rohingya crisis has made agriculture too difficult to carry out. The host community livestock farmers of Teknaf Sadar would also

previously depend on the forested slopes for animal husbandry and straw harvesting but they can no longer continue this practice due to their fear of terrorist groups.

Increases in tenancy prices for agricultural land has also been reported in Ghonar Para and Amtali in addition to Teknaf Sadar and Sabrang. A KPI shared that this inflation is perceived to have been associated with the significant changes in the existing supply of arable land as a result of the Rohingya crisis. The establishment of camp settlements, the construction of buildings for NGO institutions, the increased monitoring of forest land due to deforestation by forest department officials and the activities of groups such as ARSA, are all factors which have greatly reduced the supply of land available to farmers, which has been observed to contribute to an increase in tenancy prices. These issues are explored in depth in the second and third sub-chapter of findings.

3.1.2 Water Scarcity and reduced access to clean water

Water issues have also frequently come up during focus group discussions. While access to water can be a general issue in Teknaf and Ukhia , the focus groups in Sabrang, Lombaguna and Ghonar Para directly associated their reduced access to water with the Rohingya crisis, which has posed a threat to both agriculture and living standards over time.

In Sabrang and Lombaguna, watershed levels have decreased after the influx of Rohingya refugees due to an increase in population levels and the installation of hundreds of tube wells, which took a toll on underground water resources and the amount of water which could be extracted by farmers from bored wells and tube wells. The shallow tube wells which would

usually provide water to these groups no longer work as efficiently. In Lombaguna, some of the water from nearby lakes is also pumped away to be supplied to the Rohingya populations, which has restricted host community use of the water.

In Ghonar Para, water pollution and loss of access to tube wells both got in the way of the farmer's access to water. Many of the creeks the host community farmers would rely on have become polluted with waste from the refugee camps. The water has also become unusable due to contamination, and locals have linked it to the spread of various waterborne illnesses.

To illustrate the effects of the contaminated water, Gura Miah from Ghonar Para directed attention to a skin rash on his legs and lamented,

“Look at what the water has done to my leg, how do you expect us to keep using this water?”

Some of the tube wells which the farmers would frequently use before now fall within the camp boundaries in Ghonar Para. As barbed wires have been put up around Camp-19 over the last couple of years, the host community farmers can no longer access these tube wells as easily.

It was mentioned in Sabrang that some of the richer host community members could install deeper tubewells and overcome water related issues, but more information regarding this difference could not be collected.

3.1.3 A loss of grazing land for livestock

Loss of grazing land seemed to be one of the most prevalent issues associated with the Rohingya crisis by farmers in the study, as it affected the focus group participants in Ghonar Para, Amtali, Teknaf Sadar, Mochoni and Lombaguna, with only the group in Sabrang not expressing issues with it.

Many of the livestock farmers in the focus groups would utilise the forested slopes for animal husbandry. For many, this was the only land in which they could carry out animal husbandry, store their animals and graze them. The forested land was also crucial for farmers who utilised draught animals for ploughing. Farmers in the focus groups located in Teknaf Sadar, Lombaguna, and Mochoni would all heavily utilise these forested slopes. Due to a mix of reasons, including deforestation of vegetated land for refugee camp establishment and fuel needs, Rohingya terrorist occupation, the establishment of makeshift refugee settlements and increased regulation by forest department officials, animal husbandry can no longer be carried out in the forested slopes as easily for these farmers after the Rohingya crisis.

There seemed to be a connection between landholding and the ability to continue with livestock rearing after the mass exodus, which is discussed more in-depth in the second and third sub-chapter of the findings.

When verbalising the connection between size of land ownership and animal husbandry, Nuru , a farmer from Mochoni summarised,

"If you have more land than most you can still carry out animal husbandry in the same way. If you do not have land, you can not."

3.1.4 Changes in wages for casual labour

In some areas, wage rates have drastically decreased, which has posed issues for agrarian families for which a majority of the income comes from casual labour. A decrease in wages has especially been an issue for the Lombaguna focus group, where wage rates have dipped from Tk 400 to Tk 100, causing hardships for farmers who have become proletarianised.

Middle farmers and a few small farmers would previously hire casual labourers during labour intensive agricultural periods. While labour in certain regions of Teknaf and Ukhia such as Mochoni and Lombaguna did become cheaper as Rohingya workers were willing to charge less money for day labour compared to host community workers, labour became more expensive in some of the regions further away from campsites.

Farmers in Teknaf Sadar and Sabrang reported that many of the workers they would rely on for casual labour had started to move away to work for NGOs, as the NGOs paid wages which were a lot higher than what could be paid by small and medium farmers. The farmers shared that workers were known to claim that they earned Tk 1000 a day for "doing nothing" at NGOs, whereas they could only make Tk 200-400 a day from doing physically demanding agricultural labour on farmland. The higher wages paid by NGOs contributed to an increase in the price of labour in the area.

Abu Kashef, a farmer from Sabrang who seemed especially concerned with the increase in casual labour prices complained,

"Those who would work for us before now tell us that there is no benefit working for us anymore due to the wages which NGOs offer in comparison."

Some farmers in the focus groups in Teknaf Sadar and Sabrang mentioned that they stopped hiring casual labourers altogether, which has caused them to reduce the amount of land they chose to cultivate.

3.1.5 Loss of access to side sources of income

Many of the farmers were involved in fishing and/or timber trade along with agriculture. For the farmers in Teknaf Sadar, Mochoni, Lombaguna and Amtali, timber sales and/or fishing contributed as significant secondary sources of household income, which helped meet agricultural costs. These side sources of income were reported to be hampered by the refugee influx.

Excessive deforestation has made timber collection difficult for host community members. While some forested areas were mentioned to have been heavily deforested of adult timber plants to accommodate the housing and energy needs of refugees as was the case in Mochoni, those which still have vegetation are often heavily monitored by the forest department to curb any extra deforestation, as was the case in Lombaguna. Some farmers have also stopped selling timber as they fear being attacked by the terrorist groups which occupy the deeper parts of the forests.

Fishing has become more difficult as a result of various policies regarding the regulation of the Naf river as a result of the drug epidemic, which has been linked to the movement of refugees. Fishing is no longer allowed on the river, and the fear of extra judicial killings prevent farmers from fishing ever since the ‘zero tolerance policy’ was placed.

Loss of secondary sources of income was reported to make it harder to pay off agriculture-related expenses and tenancy. Due to this, the loss of secondary sources of income was often interwoven through discussions which otherwise focused on farming.

3.2 Effects on land relations

This subchapter looks into the ways in which the relationships between farmers and their owned land, customarily owned land and the commons changed as a result of the Rohingya Crisis. It seemed appropriate to dedicate a chapter to the land issue itself as one of the prevalent issues in both secondary resources and the findings in this paper seem to revolve around the access many farmers lost to land they owned either on paper or customarily, and the forested slopes they were used to utilising as commons. Additionally, the literature review on the effects of neoliberal development showed that disproportionate dispossession of arable land and the importance of the commons both had a class basis to it, which led to land becoming a central object of analysis for this study.

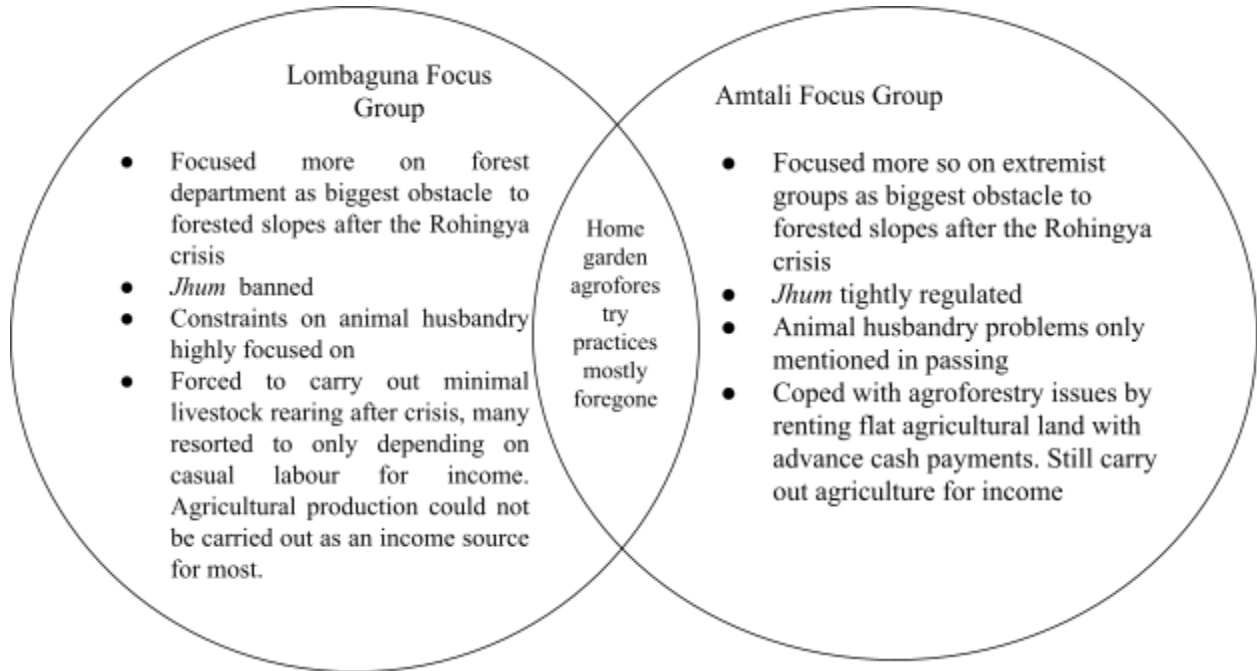
3.2.1 Forest dependency and agroforestry

Dependency on the forested slopes seemed to go across ethnic lines. Although the Chakma farmers expressed a deeper cultural and ancestral connection to the slopes, both Chakma farmers and Bengali farmers would depend on the forested slopes heavily for their farming practices. While the Chakma farmers in the focus group would rely on the slopes for *jhum*, homestead forestry, and animal husbandry, the Bengali farmers would rely on them for animal husbandry, minimal agroforestry and the collection of straw.

3.2.1.1 Chakma groups

The Chakma focus groups in the Lombaguna and Amtali areas both stated that they had been living in and cultivating the forested slopes for multiple generations. They did not report having any issues with the forestry department officials regarding their hold over forested land for agriculture, and the group in Lombaguna even went out of their way to state that the forestry department never interfered in their living and agro-forestry practices before the refugee influx. When I asked one of the KPIs who had worked extensively with the local indigenous groups, he mentioned that although issues regarding the indigenous people's relationship with forestry officials can be complex, certain arrangements would previously help ensure that forest department interference was kept at a minimum.

Figure 3: The differential effects on Chakma groups in Amtali and Lombaguna



Both Chakma groups mentioned that they would exclusively carry out *jhum* a few decades ago, but in the years leading up to the Rohingya crisis, more and more Chakma families were starting to substitute *jhum* with home garden based agroforestry. The ways in which they carried out *jhum* was also mentioned to have been modified over the years. It was mentioned that as there were fewer people carrying out *jhum*, and as there were certain terms and conditions set in place with forestry officials, intervention from forest officials was not commonplace as long as *jhum* was only carried out in plots of land allocated for it.

A few factors influenced the access Chakma groups had to agroforestry land in the hills. When deforestation rates got too excessive as a result of the refugee influx and camp settlements, forestry officials banned *jhum* altogether, as the diminished soil quality resulting from deforestation could no longer support plant regrowth after burning. In some areas, the forests

were barred from access altogether by forestry officials due to the threat posed by mass deforestation. While some of the homestead forests were barred from access due the excessive deforestation, others were encroached on by camp settlements. A third obstacle to forest access was the extremist Rohingya groups which the Chakma farmers saw as a threat to their safety.

When it came to the focus group discussion in Lombaguna, the main obstacle to *jhum* and home garden-based agroforestry was stated to be the forest department officials who had barred their access to the forested slopes as a result of excessive deforestation caused by the refugee influx. Due to the ways in which many forest department officials started to monitor some portions of the forested hills, the Chakma families could no longer take their livestock to graze there, nor could they tend to their homestead forests or carry out *jhum*. The inability to carry out animal husbandry on the slopes also had cultural significance in Lombaguna, as the inability to raise pigs was reported to have taken a toll on their cultural events and social ceremonies. Now only those with extra land can grow pigs in pens, and at most only a couple at a time.

After the barring of homestead forests, the participants in the Lombaguna discussion group were not able to raise more than one or two grown pigs as an extended family unit, and could only carry out extremely minimal subsistence agriculture around their homes to mostly support their own consumption. According to the respondents, the family members of those who would previously carry out agroforestry as small farmers in the Lombaguna group now depend only on casual labour to make their income. At most minimal subsistence agriculture is carried out.

On the other hand, the biggest threat to access to homestead forests according to the focus group in Amtali was reported to be the terrorist groups formed by the Rohingya people. Some of the more extremist political factions of the Rohingya people were known to be a part of these groups, and it was feared that they would kidnap host community members from the forested slopes and destroy the crops grown there. The theft of livestock, fruits and vegetable produce was also reported to be an issue in the forested hills.

Moyenching Chakma, a farmer from Amtali focused on how different life had become after the Rohingya crisis, when asked about their loss of access to the forested hills and reminisced,

“Women carry out a lot of our agriculture, they were safer before. Now you can only go in big groups of 8-10 people. The vegetables from our home gardens and our pigs are often stolen. We can no longer rely on the hills the way we used to, as we fear being kidnapped or having our vegetables stolen. We cannot go alone or stay in the hills even in groups after 1 or 2 PM. We have shifted most of our agriculture work to the flatlands.”

In Amtali, although most Chakma people would previously carry out agriculture in the hilly slopes for free, they are now having to rent land for agriculture in the flatter regions from local landlords for Tk 7000 (for six months). These prices are far from being easily affordable, especially considering the fact that land rent for agriculture was not something a lot of these Chakma farmers had to take into account before.

The effects on *jhum* cultivation in Amtali was less severe from that in Lombaguna. The farmers in the Amtali area mentioned that before the refugee influx, they could carry out *jhum* cultivation as long as their name was registered with the forest department. Sometimes in order to carry out *jhum* cultivation or smaller-scale agriculture in the hills, they would have to tend to some plots of forest land in return, or part take in social forestry programs. After the refugee influx, an extremely limited number of people can carry out *jhum* cultivation after the Rohingya crisis in Amtali, and their access usually depends on whether or not the Chakma Headman gives the specific individual or household permission to carry it out. Although *jhum* cultivation is limited and similarly controlled by the Forest Department after the refugee influx, it is not reported to be banned as was the reported case in Lombaguna.

One of the biggest differences observed between the two groups was that most of the farmers and their families in the Lombaguna group could no longer carry out agricultural production as a proper source of income due to their loss of access to homestead forests and *jhum*, whereas members of the group in Amtali could still continue to do so by renting agricultural land. The proximity of the focus groups was close enough that they would both have the same physical access to land being rented out for agriculture. Although both groups did come from the small farmer class, exchanges during the focus groups and with intermediaries hinted that the Lombaguna group depended slightly more on casual labour for their household income rather than agroforestry before the mass exodus compared to the Amtali group, which may hint at an existing difference in socio-economic position.

3.2.1.2 Bengali Farmers

Many of the host community Bengalis who lived around the outskirts of the Teknaf Sadar area and in Mochoni would utilise the forested slope lands as commons for animal husbandry and as sources for straw. For many farmers in these two areas, the forested slopes were the only means through which they could raise goats and cattle, as it allowed them to raise animals even if landholding was limited. They believed that animal husbandry activities had been significantly restrained after the influx of refugees.

The livestock farmers in both Teknaf Sadar and Mochoni cited deforestation, refugee settlements and the subsequent reduction of vegetated land as some of the reasons why the hilly areas could no longer support animal grazing or husbandry after the Rohingya influx. The host community farmers in Teknaf Sadar and Mochoni also strongly believed that their husbandry activities were curbed by Rohingya extremist groups and the threat they posed. These groups would often steal host community cattle for consumption, and would even hold goats and cattle for ransom, although farmers from Teknaf Sadar focused on these groups more whereas the farmers from Mochoni viewed them equally as threatening as deforestation and the establishment of camps.

When asked about the loss of animal husbandry land, Salim, a farmer from Teknaf Sadar first elaborated on why the grazing lands were crucial for livestock farmers and stated,

“ We would keep our cattle and goats in the forested hills for large spans of time, sometimes even days on end. The common forest land was especially important for animal husbandry during monsoon when it became too difficult to manage cattle in flat

lands. Now the refugee settlements taking up land and the threats from Rohingya extremists and their livestock kidnapping make it hard for us to maintain this practice."

Amir, a farmer from Mochoni mentioned that many livestock farmers had to forgo goat and cattle raising altogether. These farmers now only raise poultry as they do not have enough land to accommodate goats or cattle husbandry anymore with the forested commons gone.

Farmers in the Teknaf Sadar who would use ox and cattle as draught animals also bore the negative effects of the loss of access to grazing land.

Mohammad Yunus, a farmer from Teknaf Sadar spoke up about the implications for cultivation and agricultural expenses when draft animals could no longer be owned,

"We raised the cows we would use for ploughing in the forested slopes. Now we can no longer raise cattle or oxen on the slopes, which has forced many of us to buy tractors and power tillers for ploughing, even if it is extremely hard for us to afford."

Bengali farmers in Teknaf Sadar also depended on the forested slopes for betel nut agriculture, cucumber cultivation and the harvesting of straw. It was expressed that the soil and drainage in the slopes allowed for better agricultural conditions which could not be found in the flatlands. As many farmers who depended on the slopes for agriculture did not have any inheritance or cross-generational claim to the forested areas, they did not focus on these forms of agriculture

during focus group discussions due to the legally grey area in which their claim over the land fell.

To put it shortly, Bengali farmers would often use the forested slopes as commons which allowed them to carry out animal husbandry, agroforestry and straw collection. These practices were put to rest after the influx of refugees.

3.2.2 Dispossession of agricultural land by refugee camps

Those who have lost their privately owned land around Camp-19 (Ghonar Para) and Nobindito camp (Mochoni Village) claim to feel hopeless about getting back access to their land. Even though the group of farmers in Mochoni Village were middle farmers with noticeably higher socio-economic status compared to farmers at Ghonar Para, both groups were unsuccessful at gaining back any control of their land. Additionally, it seemed that the dispossession of arable land of farmers occurred across class and landholding groups, with the dispossession of both small and middle farmers being carried out for the establishment of refugee camps. However their coping mechanisms differed as is illustrated below, which is analysed further in the discussion chapter.

3.2.2.1 Mochoni Village and encroachment by Nobindito Camp (near Nayapara camp)

The farmers who took part in the study in the Mochoni village mostly owned the land they used for agriculture. A large portion of this land belonged to the forefathers of these farmers. The land ownership of the group ranged from 0.9 ha to 2.02 ha. However, most farmers in the focus group discussion owned over 1 ha of land, which made them middle farmers. As the Nobindito

refugee camp and other makeshift settlements started to expand, the farmers lost access to the land they previously owned and cultivated as it became occupied by refugee settlements.

When asked about efforts to reclaim land, Abu Bakar, a farmer from Mochoni remembered the false promises he was given and recollected,

“ When we first lost our land and tried to contact the *Shenabahini* to complain, they told us to be patient. It has been five years now and nothing has changed. As the *Shenabahini* told us to wait and refused to help us further, we did not know who else to go to.”

At first, some farmers tried to make a bit of money from the land they had lost. Some host community farmers who lost their agricultural land to the refugees would charge them Tk 400 to 500 for access to the land. The informal renting was stopped after some refugees complained to the camp authorities.

At present, the focus group members from Mochoni only have enough land for their housing and some small-scale poultry rearing. They stated that they no longer grow crops or carry out cattle husbandry at any scale. They carry out poultry rearing instead. Most of their income comes from the various small businesses they are a part of, which were implied to have been numerous and diverse in nature.

3.2.2.2 Ghonar Para and encroachment by Camp 19

In Ghonar Para, a village adjacent to the Camp-19 area, the situation has been more complicated. In Ghonar Para, about 180 agricultural families have lost access to the cultivation land they owned due to the expansion of Camp-19, and many now rent arable land through cash payments.

The focus group in Ghonar Para mentioned that the land they would previously own for agriculture ranged from 0.8-1.0 hectares, making them small farmers. At present, they can only rent around 0.1 to 0.3 hectares of agricultural land from fellow small farmers living in neighbouring villages, who have small amounts of excess land they cannot afford to cultivate. If the land rented falls below 0.2 ha, some of these farmers could now be considered marginal farmers. While a majority of this rented arable land is acquired through advance cash payments, there are a few farmers in the village who were reported to take part in sharecropping.

According to Sayed Noor, around late 2018, the high court declared that these agricultural families would get their land back from the camp settlements but nothing came of it. As the farmers waited to get their dispossessed land back, buildings were constructed to accommodate the police in their dispossessed land instead.

Around 2020- 2021, barbed wires were used to enclose the camp areas and set boundaries. The establishment of wired boundaries ended up dispossessing the farmers of even more of their land, some of which was not even used by the refugees or camp authorities. When the farmers tried to regain the land which continued to remain unused, they first went to the local representatives of the government and to local leaders.

Jafar Alam, a farmer from Ghonar Para was especially disgruntled by how pointless he viewed some of the encroachment to be and vented,

"That land is just left bare. I do not know why they cannot just give it back if nothing is being built on it either way."

Abdul Salam recalled they were informed that since their land fell within the boundaries of the camp, it was not under the jurisdiction of the host community authorities to take any action. He and his neighbours were advised to go to the Camp in Charge (CiC) who controlled matters within camp boundaries instead. When the farmers did report to the CiC to reclaim the unused land, they were told to take their land problems to court. The farmers felt as if the CiC would tell them to take their problems to court because he knew that the farmers could never actually afford to file any legal case.

3.3 Class contextual effects

While the farmers were not directly told about the class aspect of the study and although none of the questions or prompts highlighted class or landholding factors, exploitative elite groups and the differential adversities faced by poorer farmers (compared to wealthier ones) were frequently brought up in focus group discussions. Stories and observations which exemplified cases of pauperisation and downward social mobility were also shared. This subchapter of findings hence looks into the elites who were perceived to profit from the crisis, the influence of class in the

adversities faced and the tales of downward mobility and pauperisation, as described by the farmers themselves.

3.3.1 Perceived benefactors of the Rohingya crisis

The findings of this study showed that local elites were believed to have an influence on the adversities faced by farmers in some regions of Teknaf as a result of the Rohingya crisis. The farmers indicated that there were two groups of individuals who were thought to be using the Rohingya crisis to their advantage. The first included those involved in market syndicates centred around vegetable and fruit sales. The second group were the urban landlords who rented out land to farmers and NGOs in Teknaf Sadar and Sabrang.

During the focus group discussion in Teknaf Sadar, one of the discussions which evoked the most emotions among the farmers involved the market syndicates which were observed to have more control of the market after the influx of Rohingya refugees. The farmers believed that these syndicates would profit off of the food scarcity that the massive population increase and simultaneous arable land decrease induced, and could now more easily control the flow of food across Teknaf in ways which would help accentuate the effects of the food crisis and help them make more money off of the entire population. They felt as if the syndicates which control the fresh produce market have gained additional power as the food shortage gave them more leeway to set high prices and create artificial food shortages. They felt as if this increase in power has led to more exploitation of farmers.

When asked about the nature of the syndicates before the Rohingya crisis, Mohammad Salim, a farmer from Teknaf Sadar started to verbalise how the effects of the refugee influx aided the syndicate members, sharing,

“People of this country have only been getting worse with time but Teknaf is a special case. The Rohingya crisis helped give syndicates more power because food scarcities became more common, and they used this power to cheat us more often. The amount of land available for agriculture has been decreasing, as a lot of the land is used for NGO buildings and refugee camps now. The forests are barred too from agriculture. As a result, less land can be used for vegetable production. At the same time, there is a massive increase in population. This causes a food shortage, and raises the number of people wanting vegetables, grains and fruits.”

Mohammad Amin interrupted Mohammad Salim to help him summarise his thoughts, to say,

“He is trying to say that there are more people to feed but less food being produced. People are willing to pay whatever price is set, at the end of the day everyone needs to eat. Overpopulation and arable land reduction help syndicates gain special control over prices, they can raise it as much as they want due to high demand from the food shortage. They can even emulate food shortages more easily by timing when these food products are sold, without people raising too many questions ... Market syndicates like these were harder to form when the quantity of vegetables in the market easily catered to the entire population. The demand for vegetables has increased a lot as there are around

12,00,000 more people in our region now since 2017. With such increasing demand, it is easy for the syndicate to have more control over prices.”

The syndicates were reported to be formed by the urban vegetable sellers and market committee members around Teknaf Sadar. They were said to be "comparatively upper class" compared to farmers, and are patronised and backed up by local politicians and urban businessmen. With their political backing and social influence in the rural area, urban vegetable sellers and market committee members have a lot of freedom in setting whatever price they want when buying vegetables from farmers. The syndicates' power over the farmers compels the farmers to not sell their produce to sellers who are not associated with the syndicate.

Additionally, the market committee members often extort the farmers by imposing various illegal “tolls” on them. Without the payment of the “tolls” farmers are not allowed to sell their produce in the markets directly.

To provide a fuller picture of the syndicate problem, Mohammad Amin, a farmer from Teknaf Sadar expressed how constrained farmers felt in general with the sale of their produce when articulating their position in the market,

“Our power is limited. We can not choose who we sell to. We have to sell to very specific sellers, we cannot just sell elsewhere due to the influence these syndicates have on the market. We accept whatever price they set for our vegetables or pay a lot of toll. I could be selling my spinach for Tk 25 to these traders, only to see it being sold for Tk 70 when

I went to the market. Regardless, I cannot sell anywhere else so I have to accept the meager prices they pay.”

When asked about the toll during a follow-up, it was clarified that the “toll” which was referred to was a reference to the money that the farmers would have to pay to the market committee members illegally in order to sell vegetables directly. As the money they would be coerced into paying as rent extraction for the ability to sell their produce directly was not something which was affordable for most farmers, they would just settle for the extremely low prices the syndicates set as a monopsony unit for their goods. A couple of the farmers in the focus group felt as if the syndicates were starting to ease their exploitative control as Teknaf started to adapt to the Rohingya crisis, but their hold over farmers was very strong in the initial days, when some of their exploitative behaviour had increased drastically.

The second group that the farmers believed benefited from the Rohingya crisis were rich absentee landlords. Most tenant farmers in this study would acquire their tenancy by making advance cash rental payments to landlords and landowners, with sharecropping being reported to be a less common system of tenancy amongst focus group members. As mentioned earlier, the rent prices for flat arable land were reported to have increased in Teknaf Sadar, Sabrang, Ghonar Para and Amtali around the time of the Rohingya influx. According to the farmers in these locations, cash-based agriculture tenancy has become significantly more expensive since around 2017-2018 in Teknaf and Ukhia as there have been price hikes in land rent since then. One of the key persons mentioned that the reduced supply of arable land as a result of the barring of homestead forests, and the establishment of refugee camps and INGO offices on cultivable land

is commonly believed to be one of the causes contributing to the overarching increase in agricultural tenancy prices in the Teknaf and Ukhia region right after the mass exodus.

However, the respondents from the focus groups in Sabrang, and especially Teknaf Sadar believed that this increase also had to do with rich absentee landlords profiting out of the critical Rohingya situation. The farmers living close to Teknaf Sadar believe that cash-based rent for agricultural flat land has increased after the refugee influx as landlords mostly aim to rent their land to NGOs and INGOs, which are more profitable as tenants, rather than the host community farmers who cannot afford to pay rent at rates as high.

When asked about the general state of the land supply in the Teknaf Sadar area and the problems faced by tenant farmers, one farmer shared,

“In some areas, there is not much land we can carry out agriculture in. Refugee settlements have occupied a lot of the land, and land rent has also increased as we are now competing with NGOs for land tenancy in the flat lands. We cannot do farming on the slopes anymore either. Rent is now too expensive for many of us to afford, so we have to scale down on our cultivation area. It is worse in some areas where there are many NGOs renting land. In those areas, the landlords will deliberately set the rent at rates only NGOs can afford.”

Both the farmers in Teknaf Sadar and Sabrang kept referring to a group of absentee landlords from the city who had increased the rent prices to cater to NGOs. Although they were not as

disgruntled about the absentee landlords as they were about the syndicate members, they did emphasise on the class of these landlords and how they found a way to profit from the Rohingya crisis without having to face the adversities associated with it.

In the focus group discussion and follow-ups in Sabrang, it was mentioned that most of these landlords lived in Cox's Bazar and Chittagong city and were from educated backgrounds. These landlords earned money from the land they owned in rural Teknaf and also from the multiple businesses they headed. The farmers and locals believed most of the urban-based absentee landlords benefited from their generational wealth.

The farmers also made sure to focus on the fact that not only did the absentee landlords benefit from their multiple businesses within and outside of Teknaf, but that they were shielded from the negative effects of the Rohingya crisis due to their social influence, wealth and their spatial distance from the critical areas in Teknaf. It was also mentioned that some of these landlords are those who were privileged enough to leave the local region for the urban areas of Chittagong to access higher quality education and health care for their children, with their monthly income ranging from Tk 1,00,000 to Tk 3,00,000.

3.3.2 Adversity variation between farmer classes

As the farmers mentioned their own issues and that of other farmers they knew, a story could be put together regarding how wealth, land ownership and capital worked as a protective factor for farmers as they dealt with the effects of the Rohingya crisis. Farmers especially focussed on the

class and landholding factor when it came to their discussions on water scarcity, land rent for agriculture and animal husbandry.

In Sabrang, Syed Alam mentioned that the shallow tube wells around his area could only provide a third of the water it previously would before the Rohingya crisis. He and his neighbours were supported mainly by shallow tube wells which no longer provide water efficiently due to a decrease in watershed levels. This was especially a problem during droughts. Syed Alam believed that some people had the money needed to install deeper tube wells, but that he did not have such a privilege.

Financial resources and economic capital also becomes a determinant factor when cash has to be paid for the tenancy of agricultural land. For most farmers in the study, tenancy of agricultural land was acquired through advance cash rental payments, which was no longer affordable for some farmers as the reduction in land supply due to encroachments by camps, and the construction of NGO buildings inflated land rent.

For farmers around Teknaf Sadar, when land is rented for agriculture, the land has to be paid for about six months to a year in advance. Middle and small farmers with comparatively more financial stability could cope with the inflation in rent after the mass exodus by taking loans, and making adjustments to the amount of land they cultivated. The tenant farmers in Teknaf Sadar mentioned that they had to reduce the amount of land they cultivated at some point to keep up with rising rent prices. The effects of an increased cost of living and agriculture due to the general price hikes after the exodus, raise in casual labour rates, along with loss of side sources

of income such as fishing and timber trade (both of which are more heavily regulated after the mass exodus) all made matters worse. Poorer farmers on the other hand were unable to keep up.

Farmer Sarwar Alam from Teknaf Sadar discussed how the problem with rent was common but that the hardships resulting from it always varied and articulated,

“Some farmers I know, including myself, can still afford to carry on with cultivation by taking small loans from people we know to pay for rent. We have to reduce the amount of land we cultivate significantly, but we can still continue farming. Reducing tenancy land is common. This is not the same for everyone...some small farmers I know had to give up farming altogether as they could not afford to rent agricultural land anymore. Others are in so much debt from the microfinance loans they took to pay for rent that they had to leave the village altogether.”

There was also a sense of distinguishment articulated by focus group participants regarding the hardships faced by livestock farmers based on their land ownership. The focus groups in both Mochoni and Teknaf Sadar mentioned that farmers owning comparatively more land could still continue to raise goats and cattle at a profitable scale after the grazing lands became harder to access due to the refugee influx. It was perceived that the majority who depended solely on the forested slopes for animal rearing could now carry out animal husbandry only to marginal extents. While some farmers with more excessive hardships coped by switching to poultry rearing, others gave up livestock rearing altogether.

Although the focus group participants in Lombaguna also commented that extra land and financial resources are required to carry out animal husbandry after the mass exodus and that wealthier people are able to continue it, they were not as direct in articulating a relationship between land ownership and animal husbandry.

3.3.3 Tales of pauperisation and downward mobility

Some of the stories shared by the farmers illustrated extreme levels of pauperisation and acute downward mobility in terms of peasant/farmer class. These stories are narrated here.

In Lombaguna, it was mentioned that many Chakma families have had to drastically reduce the amount of food they eat every day as a result of the Rohingya crisis. On some days they feel as if they are compelled to subsist on only one proper meal. The respondents in the focus group tied their inability to eat to their loss of access to the hilltops, which provided these families with sources of income through animal husbandry and crop cultivation and access to fresh produce as well. Many families now depend solely on wages from casual labour according to respondents, although they were small farmers before. To make matters worse, casual labour wages have plummeted due to Rohingya workers asking for immensely cheaper daily rates in the area. This hints at the occurrence of proletarianisation as a result of the crisis.

During the focus group in Teknaf Sadar, one farmer addressed that middle farmers have been gradually losing their ability to cultivate the entirety of their possessed land. The inability was articulated to be a result of rising prices of casual labour around Teknaf Sadar, which host community members in Teknaf Sadar link to the NGOs offering jobs after the Rohingya crisis,

along with the general price hikes which have occurred over the last couple of years in Teknaf due to the mix of the Rohingya Crisis, COVID-19 and global inflation rates.

A middle farmer named Amanullah from Teknaf Sadar wished to highlight how it was not just small tenant farmers facing land related problems, vocalising,

“While it is obvious that small farmers have more issues holding on to land, it cannot be said that middle farmers are not having issues at all either... everything is more expensive now. We also get exploited by market syndicates. We do not have a side income like fishing. Some farmers have 1.6 ha (10 kani) to 2.4 ha (15 kani) of agricultural land. They can only cultivate 0.8 hectares (5 kani) now due to the rising expenses of farming, and usually rent out the rest.”

This reduction would result in the farmers going from being a part of the medium farmer category (1.0 ha to 3.0 ha) to the small farmer category (0.2 to 1.0 ha). While the farmers admitted that the recent global inflation also played a role in the rising agriculture expenses, especially for the toll it took on fertiliser and pesticide prices, Amanullah attributed some of the factors only solely to the Rohingya crisis. He connected this reduction to the regulation of timber and fishing, which led to a loss of side sources of income, raising wage rates of casual labour, and the loss of draft animals, all of which made the cost of agriculture harder to meet.

Chapter 4

DISCUSSION

This section of the dissertation discusses and analyses the findings of this study. The first subsection looks into how the information found in this study adds to and enhances the existing literature regarding the general adversities faced by farmers as a result of the Rohingya crisis. The second subsection of the findings illustrates how the agrarian/landholding class of the farmers has had an influence on the farmer's coping mechanisms and the adversities they have experienced as a result of the refugee influx. The third subsection analyses how local elites have either influenced or benefited from the problems the farmers have faced due to the refugee crisis. The last sub-chapter highlights the similarities between the effects of neoliberalism and the Rohingya crisis. The differentiation/polarisation theory, as developed by Atiur Rahman, along with Shapan Adnan's work on alienation mechanisms which derived from Harvey's theory of ABD is used in the analysis of class.

4.1 General findings regarding agricultural adversities

The findings of this study helped support some of the existing literature regarding the adversities faced by farmers as a result of the Rohingya crisis. Quader et al. (2020) and IRFC's (2020) findings stating that the establishment of refugee camps has caused a reduction in the amount of agricultural land available to farmers were supported by the findings from the Mochoni and Ghonar Para groups, the participants of which had all lost a majority of their arable land due to camp establishment.

Pre-existing literature written by Quader et al., (2020) Mukul et al., (2019) and Olney et al., (2019) on the effects of refugee influx-related deforestation and refugee camp establishment on agroforestry practices such as jhum and homestead forests was also supported by the experiences of the focus group members situated in Amtali, Lombaguna and Teknaf Sadar. Olney et al's finding regarding the effects of the Rohingya crisis on animal husbandry seemed to be an issue most frequently experienced by the focus groups, with focus groups in five out of the six regions (Amtali, Lombaguna, Teknaf Sadar, Mochoni, Ghonar Para) all mentioning it to be one of the most significant adversities they had faced as a result of the mass exodus. The adversities regarding the pollution of water bodies as reported by OXFAM (2019) and Grossenbacher (2020) were supported by the findings regarding water pollution and contamination in Ghonar Para, while the reports regarding a reduction in watershed levels by OXFAM (2019), IRFC (2020), Olney et al., (2019) and Alam (2018) were supported in Sabrang and Lombaguna, with findings in Lombaguna additionally supporting the claim of water being pumped away for camps as made by OXFAM (2019).

Some of the findings in this study helped add depth to the reported adversities in pre-existing literature. For example, although the decrease in wages rates was reported by OXFAM (2019), IRFC (2020), Alsaafin (2018), and Olney et al., (2019), they did not mention that wage rates for casual labour had increased in some regions of Teknaf, due to the existing labour force demanding higher wages for casual agrarian labour because of the higher wages offered by NGOs/INGOS, as was the experience of farmers in the Teknaf Sadar and Sabrang groups.

On the other hand, although it was separately mentioned that deforestation and camp establishment had gotten in the way of people being able to carry out forest related farming activities such as animal husbandry, jhum and homestead agroforestry (Mukul et al., 2019; Olney et al., 2019; Quader et al., 2020), and that there was a rise in crime rates (Alsaafin, 2018; Olney et al., 2019), the interaction of these two issues were not illustrated. The focus groups in Teknaf Sadar, Amtali, and Mochoni expressed that acts of ransom, theft and kidnapping carried out by groups such as ARSA were some of their biggest obstacles to carrying out animal husbandry, homestead forestry and/or jhum in the forested slopes.

Although the existing literature had mentioned that a reduction in the supply of arable land had resulted from the establishment/expansion of refugee camps (Quader et al., 2020; IRFC, 2020), the focus groups and KPI of this study had highlighted that the establishment of office and accommodation buildings of NGOS and INGOs also contributed to this reduction in arable land supply . Furthermore, the increase in the rent for agricultural tenancy due to the shrinking supply of arable land after the mass exodus was not stated in existing literature altogether.

The findings of this paper can also contribute to new spheres of information regarding the ways in which farmers coped with the adversities they faced as a result of the Rohingya crisis. Coping mechanisms were often left out altogether in existing literature. For example, in Amtali many agrarian households were renting land to carry out agriculture after losing access to the forested slopes for the first time in their lives. On the other hand, proletarianisation processes seemed to be underway in Lombaguna after the farmers lost access to their customarily held forested slope land.

4.2 Class variation in adversities and coping strategies

This subsection looks into how agrarian class positioning can affect the adversities faced by farmers. While the first portion of this subchapter looks into how the coping mechanisms of farmers faced with similar adversities seem to have differed as a result of their socio-economic positioning, the second sub-chapter looks into how the experienced adversities related to draft animal and land ownership seemed to be especially influenced by one's agrarian class and landholding, with the use of Atiur Rahman's articulation of the differentiation/polarisation theory for analysis.

4.2.1 Comparison of coping strategies

The coping strategies farmers had available for them as they adapted to the loss of agricultural land or their forested homesteads seemed to have differed based on their agrarian or landholding class. This section looks into how the focus group in Mochoni was able to adapt to the loss of their cultivation land with more ease compared to the group in Ghonar Para, as they had more coping strategies available to them. The implications for differences between the coping strategies of the Amtali and Lombaguna groups are also briefly discussed.

While the farmer groups in Mochoni and Ghonar Para were both dispossessed of their cultivation land as a result of camp establishment and consisted of ethnically Bengali men coming from a lineage of farmers, what set these groups apart was their class category. The farmer group in Mochoni were medium-scale farmers, whereas the farmers in Ghonar Para were small farmers.

As is often the case with middle farmers (Quasem, 1986), the farmers in Mochoni were involved in various forms of small businesses and trade, even before they had lost their land. Involvement in input trade usually is something large and middle farmers can take part in, with the exclusion of small and marginal farmers (Nuruzzaman, 2004; Quasem, 1986). Although they did not go into detail about what these businesses were, they emphasised that they were affiliated with quite a few trades and businesses, for a prolonged period of time.

When the group in Mochoni was asked about how they coped with the loss of their cultivation land, they mentioned that they became more involved with the businesses they took part in, and would rely on these businesses more as their source of income. While the loss of their farming land had resulted in them having to adjust their living standards, the businesses they were involved in provided them with the financial support required to adapt to their loss of the arable land they cultivated cross-generationally.

On the other hand, the small farmers in the Ghonar Para discussion group did not have the option to forgo farming altogether as they were not involved in as many businesses and trade. Only one of them owned a small shop, but still had to involve himself in marginal scale agriculture regardless. For the farmers in this group, the dispossession of their agricultural land meant that they had to rent land from neighbouring villages to sustain themselves, as they did not have money coming in from multiple other sources, such as businesses or trades. The 180 agricultural households which lost access to their cultivation land would carry out farming through tenancy, although some no longer had access to land at any scale.

The rented land which the farmers in Ghonar Para cultivate at present is their main source of income, and the rented land usually falls between 0.1 hectares to 0.3 hectares. This means that many of these farmers could be considered to have gone from being small farmers (0.2-1.0 ha) to marginal farmers (0.02-0.2 ha) as a result of the dispossession of their inherited agricultural land.

In short, while the middle farmers in Mochoni had the privilege to cope with the changes through the various businesses they were involved in without having to continue with agriculture, for the small farmers in Ghonar Para, cultivation on marginal land plots through tenancy was the only survival mechanism they had available.

While the focus groups in Amtali and Lombaguna both lost access to the forested slopes they carried out agriculture in, were both groups of Chakma people, and had similar physical access to rentable agriculture land (the communities were spatially close to each other) the members of the Amtali group was able to rent land for agriculture to substitute for the loss of customary land, while members of the Lombaguna group and their families had no option but to rely solely on casual labour wages after the loss of access to forested slopes. While both groups belonged to the small land-holding/farmer category, the Lombaguna group seemed to have relied slightly more on casual labour than the Amtali group even before the mass exodus- a distinction which could possibly place them in different peasant classes (Rahman, 1986; Islam et al., 2021) This could be one reason amongst others which led to the Amtali group being able to afford tenancy and the Lombaguna group unable to afford it. However, an in-depth comparison of this pairing was avoided as the difference between the socio-economic positioning of the Amtali and Lombaguna groups were not clear-cut, and any analytical claims without further research could pose errors.

4.2.2 Processes enabling class polarisation

This portion of the study highlights the adversities resulting from the Rohingya crisis, which seemed to differ the most strongly based on the agrarian class of farmers, with a focus on land and livestock ownership. This portion of the thesis also analyses whether or not the Rohingya crisis may have enabled the conditions which can lead to polarisation and differentiation between agrarian classes rather than attempting to detect the differentiation itself which lies beyond the scope of the paper. Theories by Atiur Rahman are used in this section, and the factors he focused on in his studies of differentiation, including land and draft animal ownership, are analysed.

4.2.2.1 Concentration of draft animal ownership

Raising inequality of livestock and draft animal ownership seems to have been enabled and catalysed by the refugee influx in Teknaf and Ukhia, as the host community's access to areas utilised as commons for animal husbandry has been greatly obstructed by factors such as excessive forest department regulation, the establishment/expansion of camp and makeshift refugee settlements and the activities of groups such as ARSA. The vegetated hills provided farmers with lots of space to graze, grow and even store their livestock free of charge, with their land holding size having no relationship with their livestock activities. Animal husbandry was made more difficult for the groups in Teknaf Sadar, Mochoni, Amtali, Ghonar Para and Lombaguna (5 out of 6 groups in the study). With the majority of farmers not having enough land to store and care for livestock after the Rohingya crisis as their main means to this was the forested slopes, the number of farmers involved in animal husbandry was reported to have decreased.

It was reported that the adjustments farmers had to make to their animal husbandry depended on their land holding size, as those with larger land holdings could still carry out animal husbandry and care for cattle and bigger animals at profitable rates. In contrast, those with relatively smaller landholding could only afford to carry out animal rearing at very marginal extents. Some can only grow poultry at present while others have given up animal-rearing altogether.

A big portion of farmers was reported to have lost most of their animals as they had nowhere to grow them after 2017. The connection between land holding size and animal husbandry problems was observed and verbalised by the farmers in Teknaf Sadar, Mochoni, and Lombaguna to different extents, even though animal husbandry-related adversities were experienced by other groups too. The farmers in Teknaf Sadar and Mochoni to different extents expressed their belief that only those owning larger land holdings than most could cope with the problems induced by the loss of grazing land after the unfolding of the refugee crisis. In Lombaguna it was mentioned that only those who could afford to construct spacious pigpens around their housing and had the space to do so were able to carry on with animal husbandry. In short, to different extents, respondents of all three areas hinted at a relationship between one's landholding and financial well-being with their ability to carry out animal husbandry after the mass exodus.

It appeared as if the grazing lands in the now inaccessible forests would previously add a sense of equity amongst livestock farmers and draft animal owners by providing them with a means for livestock rearing regardless of their economic status and land ownership. After those slopes

were barred and could no longer be used as commons, only those who had land tenancy and ownership above a certain area threshold could carry out animal husbandry, with most farmers not possessing the amount of land needed to accommodate livestock.

While properly detecting whether or not draft animals and livestock ownership did concentrate on large farmers would require additional quantitative analysis, the findings in this study indicate that one of the factors which added equity to animal husbandry has been eradicated after the Rohingya crisis. With forested slopes no longer available for use as commons for animal grazing, land ownership and land holding class seems to play one of the strongest roles in determining whether or not a farmer can carry out animal husbandry after the mass exodus. This would mean that farmers who have more land and fall within large or medium farmer categories are less likely to have issues with animal husbandry as they do not solely depend on the forested commons for animal husbandry, unlike small farmers with less land ownership or tenancy for whom the forested slopes are crucial.

4.2.2.2 A growing divide between land-holding groups

When the increasing differentiation and polarisation between large farmers and small farmers (or rich peasants and poor peasants) are analysed, one of the biggest points of focus is the concentration of landholding (Rahman, 1986). Usually the polarisation/differentiation process plays out with the disproportionate dispossession and loss of land holding (both owned or rented land) amongst the small farmers, and a concentration of land ownership amongst large farmers. In this process, the middle farmer category starts to disintegrate because they either lose land as they join the small farmer category or become a part of the large farmer category by increasing their land ownership (Rahman, 1986).

As is the case of draft animals, this study will mostly analyse and highlight the stories, observations and experiences of farmers which indicate that the Rohingya crisis may have created the conditions which may enable processes of differentiation and polarisation in land ownership, rather than trying to detect the existence of polarisation itself which would require quantitative analysis.

As mentioned throughout this paper, the price to rent land for agricultural tenancy was described to have gone through a massive increase, and this was the case in Teknaf Sadar, Sabrang, Ghonar Para and Amtali. It was believed that this increase in rent prices has to do with the reduction in the supply of land as a result of the barring of forests for agroforestry, and the establishment/expansion of refugee camps and NGO offices, all of which are factors which are directly or indirectly related to the Rohingya crisis.

As rent prices have inflated due to changes and reductions in the supply of arable land after the influx of refugees, and since rent always has to be paid for around six months to a year in advance before cultivation is carried out, the competition to acquire land was not something many small tenant farmers could survive. The inability to pay rent was also perceived to have been made worse by the price hikes on basic goods which started as a result of the Rohingya Crisis around 2017 and was later compounded by the COVID-19 and global inflation, the loss of side sources of income due to the monitoring of natural resources such as forests and rivers due to the influx, and the increasing cost of agricultural processes and labour wages after the influx, all of which made both agriculture and daily sustenance more difficult.

It was shared that small farmers with relative financial stability, and medium tenant farmers could mostly continue to carry out tenancy based agriculture by reducing the area of land they chose to cultivate, by making living standard adjustments, or by taking loans from their relatives. Reduction of the area of rented arable land was believed to be common amongst the farmers in the focus groups in Sabrang and Teknaf where tenancy was practiced both before and after the Rohingya crisis. However, those who seemed to be on the lower end of the small farmer category either had to forgo agriculture as an income source altogether or go into massive debt while trying to hold on to tenancy land. It was mentioned that this seemed to be especially prevalent in areas where farmers were competing with NGO institutions to acquire tenancy.

It seems as if the Rohingya crisis and the changes it has contributed to in land rent prices and daily living costs has caused tenant farmers belonging to both the middle and small farmer category to reduce the amount of land they chose to rent for cultivation, with some small farmers reported to have been unable to rent arable land altogether as a result of critical pauperisation.

Middle farmers with land under their ownership also had to reduce the amount of land they cultivated while renting out the rest. As explained by a farmer in Teknaf Sadar, many middle farmers who previously owned 1.6 ha to 2.4 ha of land (10-15 kani) could only afford to cultivate around 0.8 hectares (5 kani), while renting out the rest. This reduction in the area of cultivated land would bring farmers from the middle farmer category (between 1.0 to 3.0 hectares) to the small farmer category (equal to and below 1.0 hectares), based on their land holdings. He felt as if they no longer possessed the financial capital needed to cultivate larger

patches of land due to the aforementioned factors which made agriculture more expensive, including the loss of draft animals, raising prices of casual labour (in the Teknaf Sadar region), loss of side sources of income, etc.

In contrast, while some small tenant farmers lost the ability to rent arable land altogether, and small and medium farmers in more stable financial positions had to downsize their amount of landholding by either reducing their land tenancy or renting out owned land, the large land holding/agrarian class, in this case, the rich absentee landlords, were able to benefit from Rohingya crisis. The constrained supply of arable land resulting from camp and NGO establishments, along with the barring of the forested slopes were observed to contribute to an increase in land prices. In certain regions such as Teknaf Sadar and Sabrang, some of the absentee landlords were also known to benefit from the mass exodus by raising rent prices in accordance with the rates NGO/INGOs were willing to pay for offices and accommodations, at the expense of tenant farmers not being able to acquire land. A significant amount of the land rented out by land-holding elites was observed to have doubled in price as was reported in Amtali, Teknaf Sadar, and Sabrang focus groups .

More quantitative analysis may need to be done before claims regarding the existence of land concentration are made. Additionally, it is unclear how other economic factors resulting from the Rohingya crisis may have affected the absentee landlords, and whether or not they have expanded their land holding after the land loss faced by small farmers. Although it is not clear whether or not they had expanded their ownership of land, it was reported by the farmers in

Teknaf Sadar and Sabrang that the establishment of camps did not reduce the land ownership of the absentee landlords in the area.

The decrease in the land holding of small and medium farmers, and the ability of large land-holding groups to profit from the reduced supply of arable land at the risk of dispossession of smaller farmers, seem to be phenomena which may enable processes of polarisation and rising inequality in land ownership amongst small and large land holding classes as a result of the Rohingya crisis, since the small and middle farmers seemed to face a more direct threat of being forced to reduce their land holding while the ownership of large farmers remained stable.

At the least, there seems to be general differences in how each group was affected by increases in land tenancy prices. While the poorer farmers of the small farmer category were driven into pauperisation or debt cycles with MFIs in order to cope with the rent, the middle farmers had to make adjustments to the area of land they chose to cultivate and take loans from their families which they could afford to pay back. Large land-holding groups on the other hand benefited from the increasing tenancy prices as the increased profits would add to their income. These findings indicate that the Rohingya crisis has indeed created conditions which may enable differentiation and polarisation in the ownership of both land and draft animals, with small farmers being more vulnerable to the loss of access to both compared to medium farmers and large landlords.

4.3 Indirect accumulation through processes which dispossess

This section of the discussion looks into how local elites such as market syndicate members and absentee landlords have played a role in the hardships faced by farmers as a result of the

Rohingya crisis. Theories by Shapan Adnan have been used in this section. Although interviews and focus groups helped confirm that there was no deliberate encroaching of the land of small farmers during camp establishment/expansion, class dynamics did play a role in the dispossession of land in a different way.

The farmers at a baseline seemed to be constrained in their low social positioning in the market chain. They were either forced to sell their produce to the syndicate members at meagre prices or go through processes of extremely heavy rent extraction if they wished to sell their goods directly at the market. It was reported that most would choose to sell to syndicates.

The amount of cultivatable land in Teknaf was reported to have reduced significantly due to the encroachment of agricultural land by expanding refugee camps, the establishment of NGO offices and accommodations in land usually rented to tenant farmers, and because of the heavy policing and deforestation in the forested slopes after the onset of the refugee crisis. At the same time, the region had to cope with the accommodation of over 1 million refugees.

Although it was difficult to understand the entire picture regarding the market syndicates and its members, it seemed as if the farmers around Teknaf Sadar perceived syndicate members to profit from the Rohingya crisis as it enabled the conditions which allowed them more freedom and leeway to create artificial food shortages and raise food prices to their will. They felt that when the supply and demand of fresh produce were more equal, the syndicates lacked as much power and control. However, with a reduction in cultivatable land and a critical increase in population, artificial food shortages could be created without people questioning it too much. The activities

of the syndicates were reported to have been backed up by the political elites of the area. Even after prices increased, farmers in Teknaf Sadar reported having sold their produce at the same price as before the crisis.

The limited insight I was able to receive regarding the market syndicates around Teknaf Sadar has a few implications. Even though the barring of forests and the establishment and expansion of refugee camps and NGO offices resulted in many farmers losing the land they would previously cultivate, these were the same factors giving syndicate members more power to exert their political and economic control as it contributed to the refugee influx induced food shortages.

Farmers around Teknaf Sadar may have been increasingly more vulnerable to extortion, rent-seeking and market shocks due to the increase in their difference in social positioning relative to the syndicate members (Sobhan, 2021) after the Rohingya crisis. Although farmers did not wish to elaborate much on the syndicate members, they expressed in multiple ways that they felt more "cheated" and extorted after the syndicate members had become more powerful after the Rohingya crisis, as a result of their increased control over the market and the farmers.

As elaborated in the findings chapter, absentee landlords who rented to NGOs in some regions of Teknaf on the other hand seemed to have profited from the influx of NGOs and their associated infrastructure, as catering to these institutions as tenants reaped more profits than farmers would. Tenancy prices have also increased in general due to a reduced supply of agrarian land after the construction of refugee camps and the barring of forests. Due to the opportunity for profit, the

absentee landlords would often just set the rent at prices which were affordable for NGO establishments but not the farmers. The increase in tenancy prices has caused tenant farmers to either go landless or reduce the amount of land they rent for cultivation, while the absentee landlords in Teknaf Sadar and Sabrang reaped more profit, with rent prices at times doubling ². Although the report by Olney et al., (2019) had also shown that local host community members believed local elites benefited by building NGO accommodations, it was not elaborated on how this had affected farmers.

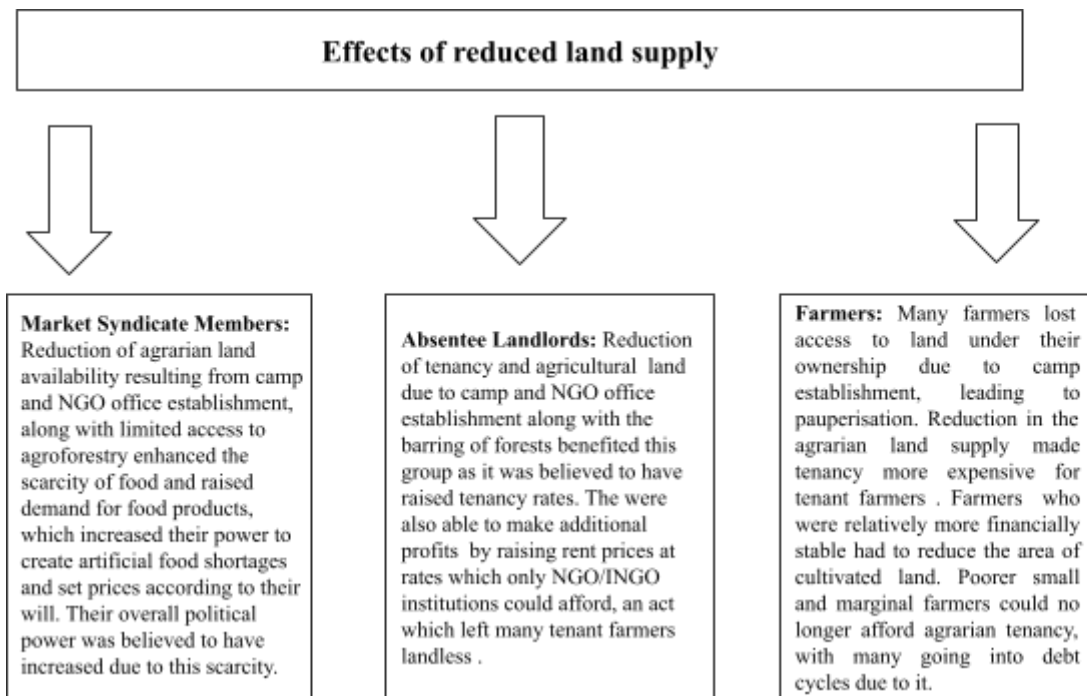
The interaction between landlords, market syndicates and farmers can be seen as processes of indirect-forced and indirect-unforced land alienation under Shapan Adnan's framework (Adnan, 2016). While the establishment of refugee camps and the barring of forested hills used for agroforestry forcefully dispossessed farmers of their agricultural land (indirect-forced), and the raise in tenancy prices and construction of NGO buildings caused many tenant farmers to go landless (indirect-unforced), these were the same processes which gave market syndicates the power to create artificial food shortages and provided absentee landlords in Teknaf Sadar and Sabrang with an increase in income flow from their rented land.

While these examples do not perfectly fit into Shapan Adnan's example of indirect but (un) forced alienation/dispossession, as it deals more with a humanitarian crisis rather than neoliberal interventions as the source of dispossession and concerns tenant farmers in some cases, what happened in Teknaf does illustrate a process in which the dispossession of both owned and rented agricultural land helped certain elites of the area accumulate wealth and power, even if

² As mentioned elsewhere, the absentee landlords in Sabrang and Teknaf Sadar were reported not to have lost land as camp establishment in the region was not near their holdings. Hence, they profited without loss.

indirectly, showing a process of accumulation through processes of dispossession. The processes and phenomena resulting from the Rohingya crisis (barring of forested slopes, dispossession of owned land due to camp establishment, general NGOfication) which displaced and pauperised farmers by alienating them from their agricultural land were the same processes helping those of a higher socioeconomic status, such as market syndicate members and absentee landlords either gain more power or profit.

Figure 4: Indirect accumulation through processes of dispossession



4.4 Similarities with neoliberal infiltration

As indicated in the findings chapters and illustrated in the discussion, there are some processes unfolding in Teknaf and Ukhia which indicate that patterns similar to what occurs as a result of neoliberalism may be present.

Although a thorough quantitative study incorporating the absentee landlord groups is required, processes which may be associated with polarisation and differentiation of draft animals and land ownership between farmer classes seem to be present. It can be said that as wealth and land holding seems to play a role in the adversities which farmers have faced with their hold over land and draft animals, processes which enable patterns of concentration and differentiation are in place. Those with more land are able to continue with animal husbandry near pre-exodus rates (or at least at comparatively higher rates), whereas small farmers without much land are unable to do so after the forested commons have been barred -which indicates that polarisation of draft animal ownership may be along class divides. On the other hand, although both small and medium farmers have been forced to reduce the amount of land they cultivate, the rich absentee landlords are believed to be making even more profit from their land after the influx of refugees and NGOs, hinting at another possible divide and differentiation of ownership based on class boundaries. Further quantitative study and a more in-depth look are required however before claims regarding concentration and differentiation are made.

On the other hand, in the same way that some local elites were able to benefit from the export zones, timber trade, and energy projects as a result of the land dispossession of the poor, some host community elites were able to indirectly benefit from the dispossession of small farmers in Teknaf and Ukhia. Although processes such as camp establishment, NGO influx, raise in tenancy prices and the barring of forests deprived farmers of their privately owned, customarily held or rented land, these were the same processes which created land shortages, food shortages and changes in tenureship which benefited absentee landlords and market syndicate members financially.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

As has been the case in Bangladesh historically with neoliberalism, this study illustrates that the farmers' class played a role in the various adversities they faced as a result of the Rohingya crisis. This study centred around 27 farmers divided into six focus groups spread out in a range of unions in Teknaf and Ukhia. Regardless of their distance from the camps, all farmers who participated in this study have had their agrarian livelihood changed in some form or another after the mass exodus.

The overarching objective of this study was to detect how a farmer's class played a role in the adversities resulting from the Rohingya crisis. The farmers themselves were always quick to incorporate their own observations regarding class-based nuances in the hardships resulting from refugee influx, even when unprompted. Adversities related to the loss of land and draft animals seem to be the most strongly influenced by a farmer's class, as middle and wealthier farmers seemed to face comparatively fewer issues in adapting their animal rearing and cultivation practices after the loss of the forested slopes, the encroachment of land, and raises in tenancy prices, which led to the unfolding of events associated with polarisation of draft animal and land ownership between farming classes. Middle farmers and farmers in comparatively stable financial situations also seemed to have more coping strategies at hand when the refugee influx alienated them from their cultivation land, whether it be the ability to solely rely on businesses as a substituted source of income or the capability of renting flat arable land when agroforestry ceased to be an option. Not only did the farmer's landholding class play a role in their experience of adversities and the coping strategies they could rely on, but the wider rural social

hierarchy also influenced their hardship. Rural agents from higher socio-economic standings such as absentee landlords and market syndicate members often benefited from the same processes which alienated the farmers from their land after the mass exodus. Market syndicate members and absentee landlords were also reported to directly influence the struggles of the farmers, with some absentee landlords deliberately setting tenancy prices which farmers could not afford and market syndicate members more frequently cheating and extorting farmers after the Rohingya crisis due to their increased power. Patterns of indirect elite accumulation along with polarisation and differentiation of land holding and draft animal ownership seems to be present in the aftermath of the Rohingya crisis, which is similar to the effects of neoliberalism on agrarian societies.

This study can contribute to literature regarding the Rohingya crisis, peasant classes, and the effects of refugee influxes on developing countries which are dependent on agriculture. The findings of this study can also guide policy implications directed at INGOs, NGOs and the local governments of Ukhia and Teknaf.

5.1 Summary of Research Findings

This study has found some nuances in the ways in which farmers in Teknaf and Ukhia were affected by the Rohingya crisis, by supplying new information regarding the ways in which fluctuation in labour wage rates, increased crime rates, the construction of INGO buildings have affected the livelihoods of farmers. The study has also added depth to the understanding of the agriculture issue in Teknaf and Ukhia resulting from the Rohingya crisis by showing how

farmers from different classes and ethnic groups have coped with the problems they have faced after losing their land holding, even though the class factor was the main focus.

The findings have shown how a farmer's landholding class, and the amount of land they owned did play a role in the issues they faced. Even when middle and small farmers were affected by the same problems due to the Rohingya crisis, middle farmers had more coping strategies at hand to deal with their losses as illustrated by the case of Mochoni and Ghonar Para. Furthermore, some of the agricultural adversities were more critical for small farmers possessing less wealth and land, such as issues related to land tenancy and animal husbandry. The farmers' broader positioning within rural class hierarchies also played a role in their problems as the processes which deprived them of their land and livelihoods were the same processes which gave comparatively powerful groups, such as market syndicate members and absentee landlords, more profit and authority. These non-farming, comparative elites also had a direct influence on the farmers' adversities, be it due to their increased capacity to extort after the crisis, or their tendency to exclude farmers from tenancy in favour of NGO institutions. A majority of the issues faced by farmers in one way or another were influenced by their differential access to cultivation land before and after the crisis.

Lastly, although more quantitative study is required, the findings of this study regarding the class factor hint that patterns similar to what has unfolded over time as a result of neoliberal reforms and development projects may be present in Teknaf and Ukhia. The findings regarding animal husbandry and loss of land ownership and tenancy hint that processes which could enable polarisation and differentiation between farming/landholding classes are present. Indirect

accumulation also seems to be present for absentee landlords and market syndicate members who took advantage of the reduced land supply.

5.2 Recommendations

The policy recommendations for this study involve cooperation from both the local government and the NGOs and INGOS of the area, along with multilateral cooperation from the various groups involved in land management in the area. While fixing the inequitable processes in place might be quite complex, small farmers can be helped if the processes which made inequalities more stark in the first place are minimised or controlled.

Local government

- It seems as if the Agriculture office is already leasing some land to farmers for free to help curb the consumption of narcotics in government-owned unused land at night. As of now, it seems as if anyone can claim the land as needed. Some of this land could be kept aside as a quota and supplied only to farmers who have either lost the entirety of their land to the establishment of refugee camps, or those who live close to areas where the construction NGO buildings are very concentrated and land rent has inflated the most. If the screening process for government leases are made more thorough, those most affected by the Rohingya crisis could be helped.
- The forest department could work in association with farmers to establish a process which allows sustainable animal husbandry in forest areas which can easily be patrolled by the forest department or in spaces where criminal activity is not as common. The patrolling could help ensure sustainable use which allows the vegetation to recover after

the massive rates of deforestation, while also ensuring farmers a safer environment which does not leave them vulnerable to criminal activity.

- There is a need to improve the drainage and sewage systems in the refugee camps and host communities to maintain better hygiene and sanitation order to prevent communicable and water-borne diseases which would help farmers living adjacent to camps.

NGOs/INGOs

- The INGO afforestation projects currently in place in Teknaf mostly incorporate Rohingya Refugees (UNDRR,2022). There could be an incorporation of host community members who have lost their homestead forests in these projects, and measures could be put in place so that they are allowed to help with the afforestation efforts in exchange of sustainable collection of non-timber forest products such as fruits and dried leaves . This policy may be the most beneficial if prior Chakma agroforesters are included as this would allow them to regain some of the financial benefits they have lost from the deforestation of forests. Inclusion of host community agroforesters could also help as they are more likely to be invested in afforestation efforts due to their lifelong connection to these forests, rather than refugees who may not have as strong of a tie to the forests in Teknaf.
- In the first year of the mass exodus, there seemed to be a steady flow of funding which supported host community farmers and helped them acquire machinery, fertiliser and other inputs. It may be important to re-start programs such as this to help the most vulnerable of farmers who have faced additional losses in the post-pandemic era.

Multilateral Cooperation

- Some form of a platform may need to be established to promote coordination between the CiC, Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission, local elders, and local government representatives for dispute settlement, and land management. One KPI commented that most of the issues that arise from land loss, especially the loss of land which ultimately remains unused even after encroachment (as was the case in Ghonar Para) usually has to do with a lack of cooperation between those who have a role to play in land management as all concerned parties have different interests and continue to refuse any form of negotiation .

5.3 Limitations of the Study

- There seemed to be a plethora of social norms and taboos governing the way in which especially sensitive topics related to the Rohingya crisis could be discussed (ARSA and yaba use by pre-adolescents for example). While KPIs and my prior field experience did help clear some of this up, it is entirely possible many issues were left out of focus group discussions altogether due to the sensitive ways in which some topics are dealt with. My identity as a young, female researcher might have made some topics especially taboo to be brought up.
- Studying the effects of ethnicity on adversities was beyond the technical scope of the paper although it is expected to have a significant effect.

- Although Bengali-Muslim farmers depended heavily on agroforestry, they did not go too into details regarding this as some of their access to the land was not technically legal, which may have limited my analysis.
- Some of the regional jargon used to describe various aspects of land tenureship and agriculture did take some time for me to get used to and interpret, which slowed down analysis.
- Language barriers related to regional dialects and indigenous languages was only an issue when communicating with elder farmers, and the focus group in Lombaguna, but this was eased with the help of translators.
- There was a tendency of farmers to narrate their own problems as a collective and seamlessly go between sharing their personal issues and the issues faced by other farmers, which at times made interpretation difficult.
- Some of the effects of the Rohingya crisis have potentially been made more critical as a result of Covid-19 and the recent global recessions. Although farmers did differentiate between the effects of COVID-19 and global inflations from that of the Rohingya Crisis on their own, and both direct and indirect questions were asked in order to enable such distinguishing, a more relaxed time frame could have helped ensure that all any other factors affecting farmers could have been accounted for more accurately.
- There were many indigenous land laws and customs which could not be accounted for in the analysis due to the short time period, especially due to the complex nature of these outside of the CHT in Bangladesh.

5.4 Further Research

There is an immense amount of heterogeneity that this study could not account for or analyse due to time constraints. To address this, further research could incorporate a heavier focus on factors such as distance of farmer settlement from refugee camps, ethnicity, type of agriculture (be it agroforestry or flat land cultivation), the effects of COVID-19 and global inflation as stronger points of focus in analysis. Tourism projects and salt agriculture has also started to infiltrate Teknaf more, and the effects of this should also be taken into account in future research.

The ethnicity factor is an especially critical aspect that requires further investigation. As Chakma people have a stronger tie to their agroforestry land and cropping styles such as jhum in terms of their culture and lifestyle, more of the issues they faced are likely to exist outside of the class and capital nexus compared to Bengalis . Additionally, the agrarian-gender division of labour in Chakma families was reported to have been different by a key person interviewee who worked closely with the Chakma families, which may also have been affected by the changes in access to agroforestry. The difficulties Chakma people would face in adapting to a different form of agriculture altogether may be different compared to Muslim Bengalis due to such extra-economic factors. It is also likely that the loss of ancestral homestead forests and agricultural customs such as jhum may have caused an increasing economic differentiation between Chakma farmers and Bengali farmers.

Further research could also aim to look into the absentee land holding class which could not be incorporated in this study as informants or interviewees, especially to study polarisation.

Lastly, although this paper may reduce the relationship between land ownership and the Rohingya crisis only in terms of loss and nothing more, this was necessarily not the case. In order to curb the *yaba* epidemic and the social issues related to it, many plots of government land were being leased to farmers for free, with no strings attached according to farmers. This was because many plots of unused government land would be used as meeting points for host community youth to abuse narcotics. It was believed that the conversion of these lands to cultivation land could help somewhat control the drug problems as people would have fewer areas utilise for drug consumption. This could also be a research thread worth more exploration.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire (Focus Groups)

Although the focus group discussions and key person interviews were semi-structured, below is the list of questions which were brought up to most parties of the two categories of informants.

- What is the area size of land you cultivate?
- How much land do people cultivate on average in this area?*
- Is there a history of agriculture in your family?
- What have been some of the main problems you think you have faced as a result of the Rohingya crisis?
- Has there been any changes to the amount of land you have cultivated as a result of the Rohingya crisis?
- Has tenancy prices changed in this area after the mass exodus? *
- Who do you rent land from?
- What is your source of water? Have you faced any problems with water which can be associated with the Rohingya crisis ?
- Do you take part in agroforestry? Do people in this area take part in any form of agroforestry?
- Has your utilisation of the forested slopes changed after the refugee influx in 2017?
- Are there any animal husbandry issues that people have faced in this area as a result of the Rohingya crisis?
- Has there been any problems you have faced with selling produce as a result of the Rohingya crisis?
- How has casual labour rates changed in your area since the refugee influx?
- On areas encroached by camps: How have you dealt with the loss of cultivation land? Have you attempted to reclaim it in any specific way?

Questionnaire (Key Person Interview)

- What are some of your thoughts on the general social stratification in Teknaf and Ukhia? What have you noticed about it during your time working here?

- How do attempts at land reclamation from campsites usually play out for host community members? Are any specific types of farmers prioritised?
- How was the host community member's access to water before and after the refugee influx?
- What is the relationship between Chakma people and the forested slopes? How do forest department officials interact with their agroforestry practices?
- To what extent do ethnically Bengali host community members utilise the forested slopes?
- What is the nature of the government land leases which have been given out in some areas ever since the influx of refugees?
- What is your understanding regarding the market syndicates that operate around Teknaf Sadar?
- What is your understanding of the absentee landlords of the area?

Appendix 2

Consent Form

অংশগ্রহনকারীর সম্মতি পত্র:

গবেষণা প্রকল্পের শিরোনাম: রোহিঙ্গা ক্যাম্প সম্পর্কে ব্র্যাক বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় অ্যানথ্রপোলজি বিভাগের থিসিস।

উদ্দেশ্য: কক্সবাজার অঞ্চলে বিপুল সংখ্যক রোহিঙ্গা জনগোষ্ঠীর ক্যাম্পের কারণে চাষাবাদে বিরূপ প্রভাব পড়েছে। লক্ষ লক্ষ শরণার্থী পুরো এলাকায় ছড়িয়ে থাকায় স্থানীয়দের খাদ্য নিরাপত্তা হুমকীর মুখে পড়েছে। এ নিয়ে রোহিঙ্গা জনগোষ্ঠী ও স্থানীয় কৃষিজীবীদের মধ্যে বিরোধ, সংঘর্ষও দেখা দিচ্ছে।

গবেষণা সংস্থা ব্র্যাক বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় :

সম্মতিনামা:

আমি নিশ্চিত যে, আমি এই গবেষণা প্রকল্পে অংশ নিতে স্বাধীরভাবে সম্মত হয়েছি। এর সাথে কী জড়িত তা আমাকে জানানো হয়েছে, এবং প্রশ্ন করার সুযোগও পেয়েছি। আমি বুঝতে পারি যে আমার কথপোকথন রেকর্ড করা যেতে পারে এবং আমি আমার দেয়া তথ্য এই গবেষণা প্রকল্পে ব্যবহার করতে সম্মত। আমি বুঝি যে আমার অংশগ্রহণ স্বেচ্ছাসেবী এবং আমি কোনো কারণ এবং খরচ ছাড়াই যে কোনো সময়ে প্রত্যাহার করতে স্বাধীন। আমি বুঝতে পেরেছি যে - আমি যে তথ্য প্রদান করছি তা গোপন থাকবে। যতক্ষণ আমার তথ্য সর্তকতার সাথে বেনামী করা হবে, আমি আমার অনুমতি দিচ্ছি গবেষণার জন্য আমার তথ্য ব্যবহার করার। আমি স্বেচ্ছায় এই গবেষণায় অংশ নিতে সম্মত।

অংশগ্রহনকারীর স্বাক্ষর

গবেষকের স্বাক্ষর

Appendix 3

Photos from field work

