

# **Generating Employment Opportunity for the extreme poor during Monga**

**A dissertation  
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## **Acronyms**

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AL	Awami League (a political party)
ASA	Association of Social Advancement
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BIDS	Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies
BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party (a political party)
BRAC	Building Resources Across Communities
BRDB	Bangladesh Rural Development Board
BSCIC	Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation
BSS	Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha
BUP	Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad
CFW	Cash-for-work
CLP	Char Livelihood Program
CPD	Centre for Policy Dialogue
CSS	Centre for Social Studies
DC	Deputy Commissioner
DFID	Department for International Development
EPZ	Export Processing Zone
EU	European Union



FAD	Food Availability Decline
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
FFW	Food-for-work
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
HYV	High yielding Variety
ILO	International Labour Organization
JI	Jamat-e-Islam (a political party)
JP	Jatiya Party (a political party)
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MMIPP	Monga Mitigation Initiative Pilot Project
MFI	Micro Finance Institute
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OMS	Open Market Sale
PFDS	Public Food Distribution System
PKSF	Palli Karma Shahayak Foundation

PPRC	Power and Participation Research Centre
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RAKUB	Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank
RDRS	Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SDF	Social Development Foundation
SIPP	Social Investment Program Project
SME	Small and Medium Industries
TR	Test Relief
TMSS	Thengamara Mahila Sabuj Sangha
UNDP	United Nation Development Project
UNO	Upazila Nirbahi Officer
UP	Union Parishad
VGD	Vulnerable Group Development
VGf	Vulnerable Group Fund
WFP	World Food Program

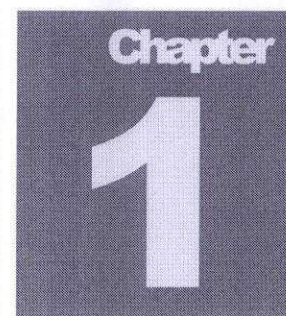


## **Abstract**

The northern part of Bangladesh particularly Greater Rangpur is ecologically vulnerable and economically weaker. It is a labour surplus region and agriculture is the main sector employing around 70 percent of the total active labour force. Agriculture is not diversified, characterized by Mono-cropping, chiefly based on paddy. The extreme poor, mainly dependent on selling their labour, are vulnerable to employment opportunities in the off-season (mid-September to mid-November or Ashwin to Kartik), when there is shortage in labour demand in the agricultural sector. This leads to severe seasonal deprivation, disturbing regularly, primarily caused by employment and income deficit called “Monga”. This study endeavors to view the “Monga” situation from the context of employment dynamics. First, this study illustrates the causes of persistence of Monga despite various government and non-government interventions. It also explores the labour market scenario and employment status during Monga. It then examines the challenges and constraints facing existing employment initiatives. The study finds that the severity of monga has been decreased to some extent in the last years. Seasonal labour migration, improvement of transport facilities and the communication facilities to send back money to the family are the main reasons for the improvement of the situation. The programs undertaken by government and NGOs to mitigate monga have very little impact on the livelihood of affected people. The main problem of those programs is that there is no coordination among them. Absence of assessment is another big problem. Coverage of these programs is inadequate. Moreover, absence of a comprehensive database hinders appropriate management of monga. NGOs take on very little program except micro-finance. Micro-finance does not effectively reach the extreme poor. There is lack of program focusing long-term employment generation. Finally, the study provides some policy suggestions both short-term, medium to long-term measures to reach desired employment potential to mitigate Monga.

***Key words: Monga, Government, NGO, Employment.***





## CHAPTER ONE

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Problem Statement

The Northern part of Bangladesh<sup>1</sup> is situated in the Teesta<sup>2</sup> and Jamuna<sup>3</sup> basin, and contains many tributaries of these. Topography and climate make the area ecologically vulnerable to natural disasters including floods, river erosion, drought spells, and cold waves, all of which occur more frequently and intensely than in other regions. Moreover, incidence of chronic structural poverty in this region is comparatively higher. Lack of political patronage is an important cause of underdevelopment in this region. Amidst these compelling situations, the local economy shows little diversification and is heavily dependent on agriculture. Again, agriculture is characterized by mono-cropping, mainly based on paddy. Moreover, due to the weak communication system of the region, industrial base is still very small. The long distance to the important markets in Dhaka and the harbour in Chittagong might be one of the major reasons of economic backwardness. In this setting, local and informal employment is limited due to the frequent hit of natural calamities. As the landless and poorest survive on agricultural wage labor, their opportunities and ensuing incomes drop, particularly between transplantation and harvest of the Aman<sup>4</sup> paddy, which is called “Monga”. Employment

<sup>1</sup> Northern part of Bangladesh refers to Greater Rangpur includes 5 districts, namely Rangpur, Gaibandha, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari and Kurigram.

<sup>2</sup> Teesta is one of the major rivers of northern Bangladesh.

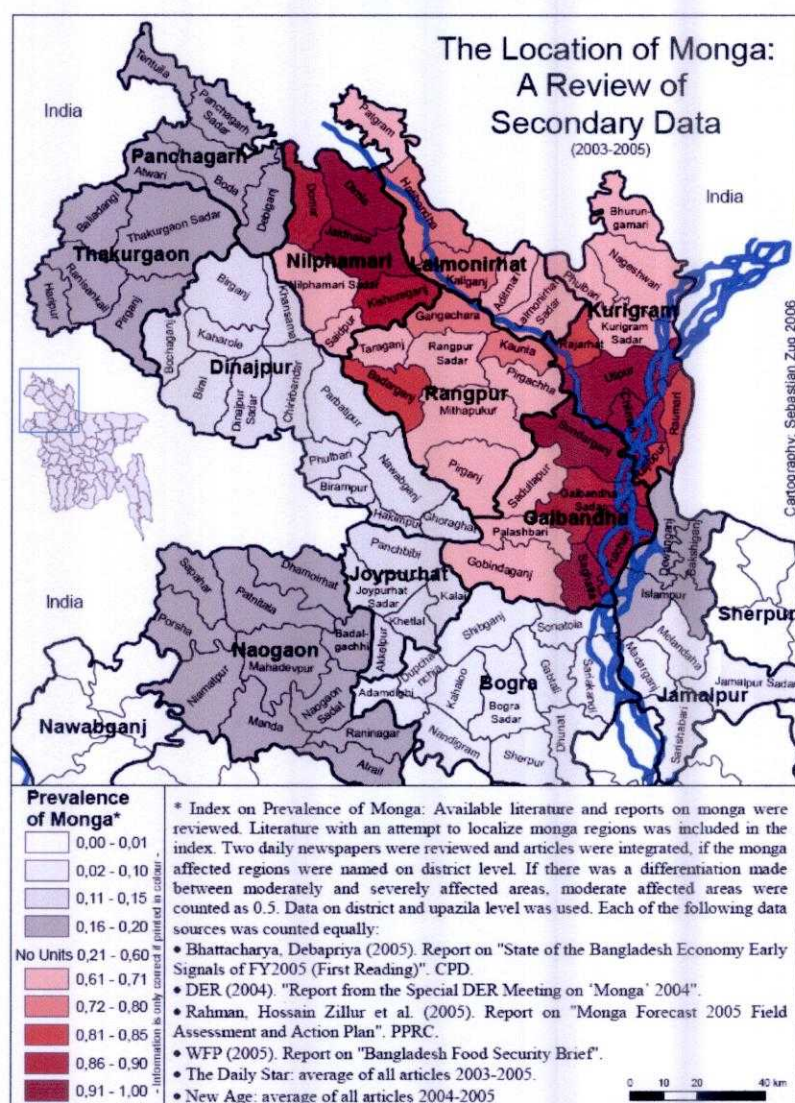
<sup>3</sup> Jamuna is one of the biggest rivers of Bangladesh.

<sup>4</sup> Aman is rice grown in the monsoon season.



and income of workers remain unprotected round the year due to seasonal unemployment and/or underemployment.

**Fig 1-1: Map of Monga region**



Source: Zug S (2006), Monga, Seasonal food insecurity in Bangladesh- Understanding the problem and strategies to combat it

Monga is a severe seasonal deprivation and a famine like situation in ecologically vulnerable and economically weaker part of northern Bangladesh, primarily caused by an employment and income deficit before aman is harvested. It is sometimes locally termed



as 'Ovab'<sup>5</sup> and literally termed as 'mora kartik'<sup>6</sup>. It occurs during mid-September to mid-November (Ashwin-Kartik) disturbing regularly. Households reliant on agricultural wages find their pre-harvest purchasing power dropping drastically due to a rise in prices of food staples coupled with a fall in local labour demand and wages. There are two aspects to the problem which merit the distinction: the long-term problem of seasonal poverty, and, year to year variation in the severity in monga. The long-term problem arises from seasonal lack of employment opportunity in an undiversified, agriculture dependent local economy. Year to year variation in severity is dependent on a number of contextual factors such as the degree of natural disaster, the robustness of the preceding boro<sup>7</sup> crop which determines cash availability in the household and opportunity of coping with crisis.

Although other parts of rural Bangladesh also experience price rises and wage drops during the same season, their extent and consequences leading to hunger and famine appear quite unique in greater Rangpur. Roughly 7 percent of total population of Bangladesh (about 9.6 million people) lives in this region, about 5.3 million of them living below the poverty line (World Bank; 2008). During Monga, employment opportunities reduce on average 50 percent and wage rate drops by 50 percent in the region. The suffering during Monga thus is not limited to a small pocket of households. As the large number of people are suffered from Monga regularly, it should be addressed with due attention.

## **1.2 Rationale**

Monga is an important national issue, which started to catch public attention recently. Government and NGOs have been undertaken various programs to mitigate monga since it noticing all. The paradox is that there is persistence of monga vis-a- vis the multiplicity

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<sup>5</sup> Ovab refers to the lack of means to fulfill the basic needs particularly food.

<sup>6</sup> Kartik is one of the months of Bengali calendar. 'mora' means dead or lean. During kartik, most of the poor family suffers from scarcity of food in rural Bangladesh. People's income falls drastically due to the employment crisis in agro-based rural society. This phenomenon is known as 'mora kartik'

<sup>7</sup> Boro is rice grown in dry season.



of anti-monga programs. A very limited number of studies were conducted on monga. Most of them were on understanding of the problem. Some of them focused on strategy and policy advice. But, the impact of government and non-government interventions to mitigate monga remain unexplored. The assessment of those government and non-government supports has failed to attract sufficient intellectual attention. Moreover, a small number of studies have been conducted focusing the main cause of monga, e.g. employment and income crisis. In an attempt to rectify these neglects, this study attempts to examine the impact of government and non-government interventions for generating employment opportunities to mitigate monga.

### **1.3 Scope of the study**

In examining government and non-government measures to mitigate monga, the strength and weakness of those programs were identified. Currently used strategies were analyzed. Despite government and non-government interventions, reasons of its existence were identified. In light of this analysis, some recommendations were derived. Those recommendations are not to be understood as suggestions for solving monga, but as a contribution to the process of discussion to set long-term strategies to address monga.

### **1.4 Objective**

The general objective of the study is to address the causes of Monga and provide a comprehensive approach to solve it through employment orientation. However, the specific objectives of the study are:

- To identify the causes of monga despite various government and non-government interventions.
- To observe labour market Scenario, its dynamics and sectoral distribution of employment in northern Bangladesh.

- To find out challenges and constraints facing existing employment initiatives.

### **1.5 Research Question**

The research question is:

- Why does Monga exist despite various government and non-government interventions?

### **1.6 Literature Review**

Till now, some studies have attempted to deal with famine in Bangladesh, but very few have so far focused directly on the monga. A brief references to some published books, reports and studies done on different aspects of monga like vulnerability, employment deficit, geo-environmental issues, political debate, economic activities and government & non-government interventions may give a general idea as well as necessary guideline about the conceptual basis of the present research.

Hossain M. in his report on “Containing monga in northern districts” identified some reasons of monga: (1) Overall poor economic condition of the area; (2) Less scope of employment opportunity; (3) Low degree of economic activities in this area; (4) Most of the migrated day labourers of this area become jobless when other areas' harvesting is affected due to flood and other natural calamities; (5) Lack of income generation process for the poor etc. (Hossain M.,2004 ). It suggests some temporary solutions such as social safety net program, private relief operations, pre-cautionary measures taken earlier and long run solutions such as strengthening NGO activities, revitalizing rural banking activities, small and medium scale industries.

Prepared by Power and Participation Research centre, Monga Forecast 2005: Field Assessment and Action Plan presents the nature of vulnerabilities such as employment



crisis, malnutrition and price hike of essentials. It also mentions some coping strategy of the affected people. This study does not exclusively identify and explain the issues related to monga. Indeed, it forecasts the severity of monga and provides an action plan.

Zug S. prepared a report on "Monga- Seasonal food insecurity in Bangladesh, Understanding the problem and strategies to combat it" as volunteer for the German NGO NETZ Partnership for Development and Justice. It provides a comprehensive idea regarding monga including its geographical perspective, different dimensions and strategies to combat monga. It identifies underdevelopment as the main cause of monga and political debate associated with it (Zug S., 2006).

Rob A. in his report on "Monga: Contemplating solutions" suggests the government should look for a long term measure and frame policies to face Monga (Rob A., 2005). The government policies must be based on finding jobs in and around depressed areas or small cities where they grow up. The long term view of the government should concentrate on decentralization of industries and help setting up of large and medium industries under government patronage. The policy of decentralization of industries in the depressed areas requires more of social and economic needs rather than the needs of entrepreneurial opportunity at the beginning. The decentralization of the industries in the depressed areas requires long term planning by government to develop depressed areas into "growth zone". In such "growth zone", increased public and private investment are to be made so as to give support to its development. No policy will do away with problems unless it establishes not just a number of new industries but the nucleus of industrial complex which will have a natural power of self-sustained development and expansion.

In their study on "Facets of hunger: Examining Monga in Northern Bangladesh" Shamsuddin et.al. argue that the underlying principles of existing socio-political process are the principal hindrances in order to tackle monga (Shamsuddin et. al., 2006). This



study regarded the monga as synonymous to seasonal famine and as caused by the failure of a set of 'bundle entitlements' prevailing in the socioeconomic process resulting in destitution of the most vulnerable, marginal and least powerful class in the area to point where the individual in the class can no longer maintain a sustainable livelihood.

In his article on "Mora Kartik to Bhora Kartik: Scaling up comprehensive monga mitigation" Rahaman H. Z. identifies two paradoxes worth bearing in mind when contemplating a scaled-up attack on monga (Rahaman H. Z., 2007). Firstly, Greater Rangpur, i.e. the region where the monga phenomenon is concentrated, is a food surplus rather than a food deficit area. The second paradox is that there is no dearth of anti-monga programs, particularly since the issue came into national focus several years ago. The persistence of monga vis-à-vis this multiplicity of programs thus suggests the need for a qualitatively stronger framework for coordination, a more effective lesson-learning from existing programs, and finally, establishment of a comprehensive data-base and a credible monitoring strategy.

Elahi K. M. and Ara I. wrote a book "Understanding the Monga in Northern Bangladesh" have gone into in-depth analysis of the recurrent events of the Monga syndrome and its linkages with food availability and food security. For the possible alleviation of the Monga induced poverty, this study focuses on a number of key interventions, such as strategies for regional socioeconomic development and food security with specific local thrusts, potential areas of agricultural diversification, employment diversification, and the prospects of land reforms (Elahi K. M. and Ara I., 2008).

Shahriar T. M. and Khalily M. A. B. in their study on "Coping Strategies of the poor and vulnerability in greater Rangpur: What matters most?" depicts that the major mechanism employed throughout the region is migration (Shahriar T. M. and Khalily M. A. B., 2008). The significant finding of this study is that despite an understanding of upcoming hardship and shock, the household are forced to implement resource erosive coping strategies to combat upcoming monga.



In their study on “Impact of microfinance on economic hardship in greater Rangpur” Khalily M. A. B. et. al. examine the effectiveness of microfinance program in extreme poverty. The study shows that hardcore poor are less benefited from participation in microfinance programs. The existing microfinance design probably not appropriate. This study suggested that if micro finance does not contribute to the creation of assets for the extreme poor households, then it will create more liability for them ( Khalily M. A. B. et. al., 2008)

The existing literatures mainly focus on understanding of the monga problem. Those discuss different dimensions of monga such as agricultural, social, economic, geographical, market and temporal dimensions. Some of the studies identify vulnerabilities and coping strategies of the local people. Some of them categorize causes and consequences of monga. Some of the literature provide strategy and policy advice to mitigate monga. A small number of study queries the key interventions, such as socioeconomic development, food security with specific local thrusts, and the prospects of land reforms. But, specific and definite examination of government and non-government interventions has failed to attract sufficient intellectual attention. To fill up this gap, the current thesis would examine the impact of government and non-government interventions to mitigate monga.

In view of the above discussions, the current thesis would initiate queries why monga exists despite various government and non-government interventions. In this thesis, I discuss the reasons for lack of achievements and point out the initiatives to mitigate monga. The work stresses on the urgent need for comprehensive action-oriented program focusing employment generation in the center. Nevertheless, to make the study reflective to the socio-cultural and economic conditions of the region, a special focus has been given on the long historical background of monga in this part of the world.

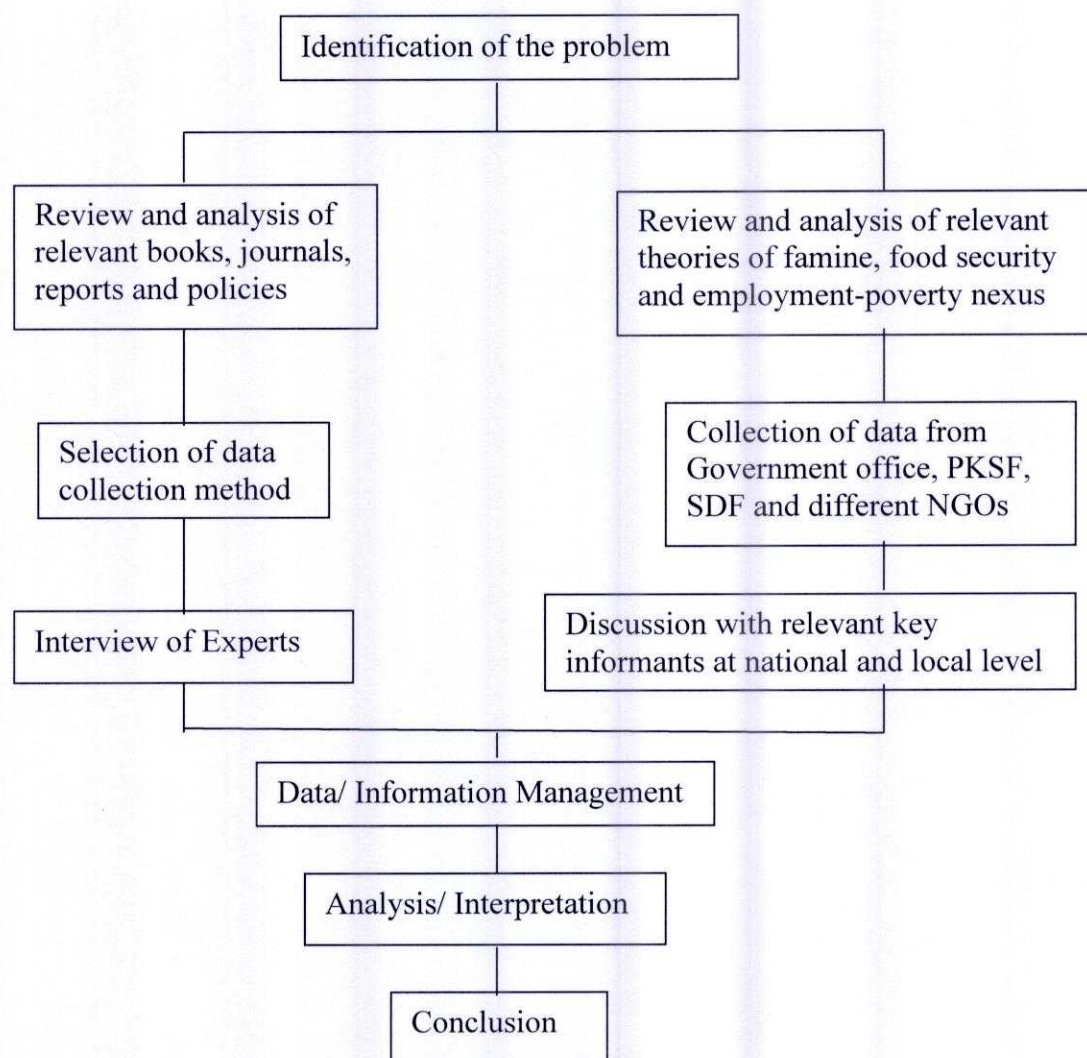


### **1.7 Methodology**

The study is based on different information sources. Various secondary data was reviewed. Important primary data was analyzed. Scientific literature with a focus on seasonal poverty in the context of Bangladesh is very scarce. The topic is strongly interlinked with poverty in general and issues like ecological vulnerability, coping strategies and economy. Valuable information related to monga was found in those publications. The information was also collected from different books, reports and news paper. Electronic publications were also explored. Various theories regarding famine, food security and employment-poverty nexus were consulted. In addition, different publications of Social Development Foundation (SDF), Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) and Institute of Micro-finance (InM) were used as secondary sources. These sources generally covered the historical evidence, present trend, spatial context, food shortage, employment status, market scenario and related conditions at both macro as well as micro level.

The study was conducted primarily by a qualitative methodology. Quantitative analysis was also done. Interview method is mainly used as primary source of data/ information collection. Structured interview method was applied. Some prominent experts of monga were interviewed. They have both theoretical knowledge and practical experiences. Some vital primary data was collected from the field level. Content analysis was also done. It combines primary and secondary information with interview of distinguished experts. Valuable data/ information obtained from interview, primary and secondary sources were analyzed.



**Fig 1-2: Schematic diagram of followed methodology**

### 1.8 Limitation

Some limitations impede this study to be one of the finest ones. The limitations that affected the study are-

- Survey method cannot be conducted due to the time constrain.
- Anthropological method is suitable to eradicate conceptual ambiguity regarding the structure of poverty in the monga region. This method could not be used due to heavy academic pressure.

## **1.9 Chapter Outline**

The whole thesis consists of six individual chapters including introduction, background information, theoretical framework, response of government and other agencies, interview of experts and its analysis and conclusion. Chapter one or introductory chapter includes problem statement, literature review and methodology. Chapter two or background information explores social, economic and geographical and political aspects of monga. It also identifies causes and consequences of monga. Chapter three or theoretical framework views monga in light of entitlement approach, framework of food and nutrition security and employment nexus between growth and poverty. Chapter four on the broad heading of 'response of government and other agencies, discusses government support including temporary food support and employment generation and NGO's program including microcredit and financial institution's activities. Chapter five includes interviews of the distinguished experts, analysis and findings. The last chapter or chapter six concludes the thesis and provides some recommendations.



Chapter

2

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. Background Information

#### 2.1 Delving History

An examination of famine history in Bengal shows that there were only 3 famine events before the beginning of British rule in 1765. But, there were nine devastating famines in the region between 1765 and 1944.

The famine of 1770 is popularly known as “Chhiyattarer Manvantar” (The Great Famine of 1176 Bangla Year). It was the worst famine in Bengal in the 18th century. The excessive rainfall in 1770 did not relieve the people from the sufferings of drought of the year before; on the contrary, it caused overflowing of rivers and damaged standing crops. The existing revenue system of land and activities of middlemen in the food grain market further deteriorated the situation. The immediate effect of the famine was the depopulation of severely affected areas. About one-third of the population, i.e., about 10 million people perished in this famine.

In 1943, a great famine occurred in Bengal. It was estimated that 3 million people died of starvation and associated infectious diseases. Northern part of Bangladesh was the mostly affected region. The famine occurs due to crop failures beginning from 1938 and other disruptive events accompanying the Second World War. The government purchased and destroyed large quantities of rice in order to deprive advancing Japanese army from the



food stock. Moreover, interruption of normal imports of food grains from Myanmar due to its fall to the Japanese, dislocation of trade, irregular movement of food grains due to the war in the East, and building up of provincial and district barriers against the movement of grains and other essential supplies, increased demand for food to meet the want of the army, and inflow of refugees were some important factors leading to the famine. As a result, food prices increased exponentially. Eventually, people faced starvation and died. The number of people died due to great Bengal famine of 1943 in the districts of greater Rangpur was mentioned in the following:

**Table 2-1: Deaths due to the Great Bengal Famine of 1943 in the districts of greater Rangpur**

District	Total Population	No. of Deaths	Percentage of deaths
Rangpur	830,742	53,321	6.41
Kurigram	678,864	34,968	5.15
Nilphamari	594,288	43,804	7.32
Gaibandha	769,978	49,685	6.45
Lalmonirhat	-	-	6.00

Source: Elahi K.M. and Ara I. (2008), Understanding Monga in Northern Bangladesh, Academic Press and Publishers Library

There was a famine in northern districts of Bangladesh in 1974. This famine occurred in the wake of the government's efforts at reconstructing the greatly dislocated economy, rendered so by the Independence War. Although correct estimates are not available but unofficial reports reveals that about 2.5 million lives were lost through famine; however, the official estimates were considerably lower, 26,000 only (Elahi K.M. and Ara I. , 2008).

The famine of 1974 bears an analogy to the monga phenomenon. Heavy flooding during summer and autumn led to extensive damages on the newly planted aman crop and employment opportunities for the agricultural labourers decreased stronger than usual. The traders expected a low supply of paddy for the coming harvest and therefore started hoarding. Overestimations of the shortfall led to a price explosion which peaked in November. The rural poor, weakened by the severe lean season, could not fulfill their basic needs because the prices were too high. Like monga, the famine 1974 was not a problem of availability, as the preceding harvests were good and the stocks were full, it



was created by a lacking access of the people. The cause of the famine 1974 can be seen as a very severe monga and Greater Rangpur was said to be the worst affected region (Zug S, 2006).

## 2.2 Incidence of Monga

Monga affects the peoples of all 5 districts of greater Rangpur. The primarily affected upazilas within these districts are those along Teesta and Jamuna River. This geographic deviation may impart to monga. Incidence of Monga in various districts of greater Rangpur is mentioned below:

**Table 2-2: Incidence of Monga**

Districts/Area	No. of Upazilas	No. of Union/ municipalities	No. of affected villages	No. of affected families
Gaibandha	7	69	999	394661
Nilphamari	3	16	35	8262
Kurigram	9	60	Not available	77460
Lalmonirhat	5	21	118	57018
Rural (Total)	24	166	1152	537401
Urban(Total)		7		12202
Grand Total		173		549603

Source: [http://www.lcgbangladesh.org/derweb/achieve/docs/2005/CARE%20Report%20on%20Monga%20\(Nov%202005\).pdf](http://www.lcgbangladesh.org/derweb/achieve/docs/2005/CARE%20Report%20on%20Monga%20(Nov%202005).pdf)

## 2.3 Livelihood of Extreme Poor in Greater Rangpur

The livelihood of extreme poor consists of 2 parts: vulnerability and livelihood strategy.

### 2.3.1 Diverse Vulnerability of the Extreme Poor

The vulnerabilities of the Extreme Poor in monga region are diverse in nature. It includes shock, stress and seasonality.

*Shock*

To the extreme poor, the greatest risk to their vulnerability is riverbank erosion. Though natural disaster is a shock to the livelihood of the whole community, it leads to the entitlement failure of the extreme poor households quickly compared to the any other types of households. It reduces scope of employment of the wage labourers in agriculture. It also drastically reduces the employment opportunity of the extreme poor households.

*Stress*

Low income can be considered as the 'outcome of crisis' but the extreme poor categorically mention them as 'cause of crisis'. The source of low income lies in the seasonal unemployment, intense competition in the labour market (Datta D. and Hossain I.; 2003).

*Seasonality and Trend*

Job scarcity was mentioned as a cause of the vulnerability. It referred to seasonal unemployment.

**2.3.2 Livelihood Strategy of the Extreme Poor**

The extreme poor households have very little capacity to maintain a sustainable livelihood. Each and every member of these households always tries to maximize his/her efforts to earn money in many different ways, including begging. They work as day labourers or get involved in menial tasks in both on-farm and off-farm activities. Along with earning money, both women and children of these families are engaged in various expenditure-saving activities such as, foraging food, collecting fuel, etc. Members of these families do not spend on clothing. They always try to collect clothes from employer

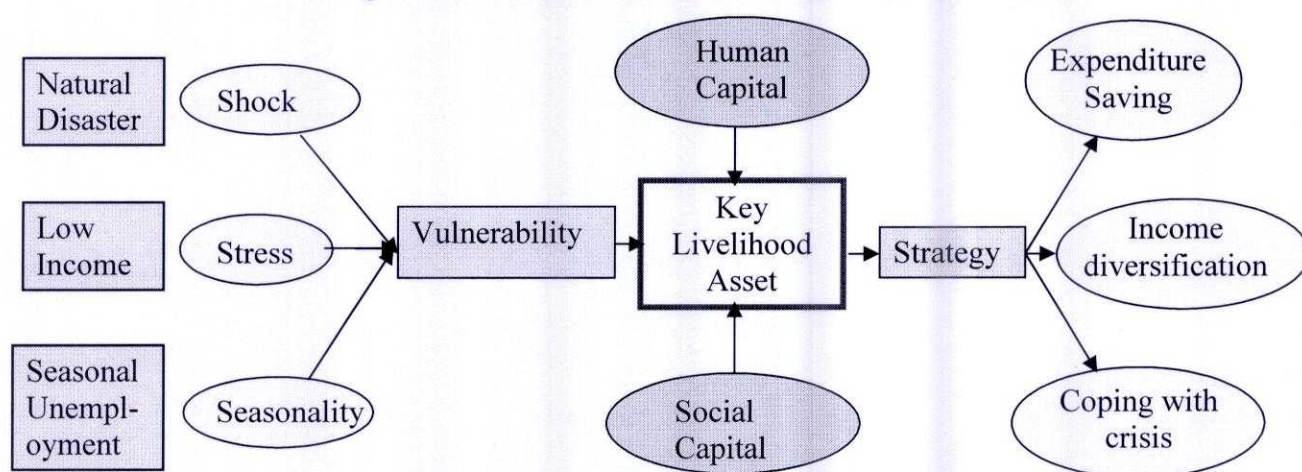


or rich families on different occasions. Those who work as maidservants, also try to collect food from their employers.

Income diversification often leads to a general improvement of the family's situation and it can also reduce the seasonal shock affecting their livelihood. One family of char earns its living from two major sources. They cultivate some small lands and the household head works as a carpenter. Employment in this profession increases before the end of monga, as people have to build up storage facilities for the coming harvest (Datta D. and Hossain I.; 2003).

During monga the extreme poor households do many adjustments to reduce the impact of crisis. The common mechanisms that were found to cope with crisis are: reduce consumption of food or other essential goods; purchase inferior substitutes (e.g., foods); asking neighbours and relatives for help (e.g., borrowing cash, raising fund from community); postpone debt repayment; sell moveable assets (e.g., poultry birds), etc. The above discussions have summarized in the following figure.

**Fig 2-1: Livelihood framework of the Extreme Poor**



Source: Datta D. and Hassain I. (2003), Reaching extreme poor: Learning from Concern's Community Development Programmes in Bangladesh

## 2.4 Causes of Monga

There are many causes of monga which exacerbates monga situation together. These are: underdevelopment of greater rangpur, agricultural impasse, limited industrialization, employment crisis, market failure, political factor, land ownership pattern, lagging char lands and natural disasters.

### 2.4.1 Underdevelopment of greater Rangpur

The 'monga region' is economically weaker than other regions of Bangladesh. Per capita GDP of these districts is far below the national average. Gaibandha, one of the districts of this region, is the lowest in whole Bangladesh.

**Table 2-3: GDP of the districts of greater Rangpur (1999/2000)**

District	Per capita GDP		Manufacturing Category of the GDP	
	In Taka	Percent of national average	In Taka	Percent of national average
Gaibandha	12444	67.2	400	14.7
Kurigram	13757	74.3	341	12.5
Lalmonirhat	13855	74.8	254	9.3
Nilphamari	13292	71.8	263	9.7
Rangpur	14936	80.7	820	30.1
Bangladesh	18511	100	2720	100

Source: Zug S, "Monga- Seasonal Food Insecurity in Bangladesh- Bringing Information Together, The Journal of Social Studies, No. 111, July-Sept. 2006



If GDP's component of manufacturing<sup>8</sup> is considered, Lalmonirhat, Nilpharmari and Kurigram are the three districts with the lowest productivity in this sector in Bangladesh. Industrialization in Greater Rangpur is far below the national average. Only in Rangpur, mainly industries related to the processing of tobacco provide employment for a significant number of people. In the other districts and in most of the rural parts of Rangpur district, off-farm income for the unskilled rural poor is restricted to the brickfields, the rice and saw mills, earth works and rickshaw pulling.

Reasons for the economic backwardness of the region are manifold. The big distance to the important markets in Dhaka and the harbour in Chittagong might be one of the major reasons. It leads to a competitive disadvantage for the production and marketing of agricultural and non-agricultural products of the region (Zug S; 2006).

The comparison on the macro-economic condition shows that greater Rangpur is less developed than other region of Bangladesh. Undiversified agriculture, limited industrialization, weak communication system and weak infrastructure are main reasons of underdevelopment of greater Rangpur.

#### **2.4.2 Agricultural Impasse**

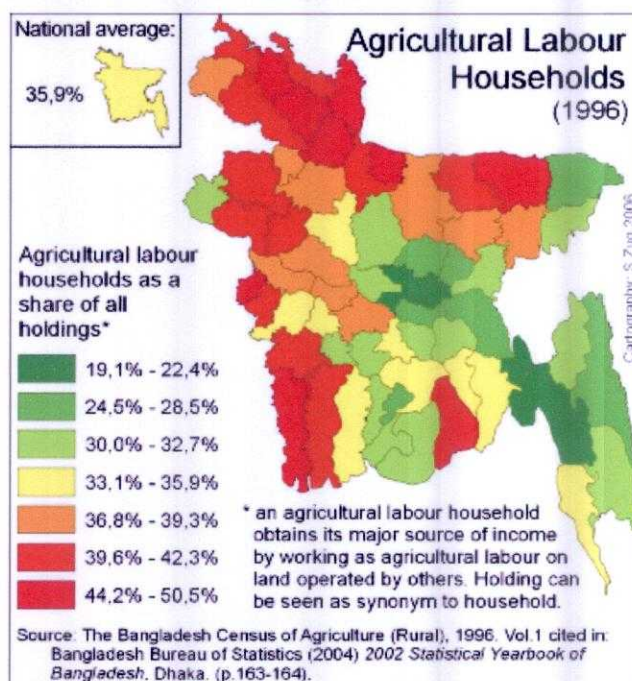
In greater Rangpur, major employment opportunity is agricultural labour. The unequal land distribution combined with the lacking alternatives results in a very high share of agricultural labour households in the region. Kurigram is the only district in whole Bangladesh, where more than half of the population (50.5 percent) was working as day-laborers in 1996. The proportion in the other districts of greater Rangpur is far above average too.

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<sup>8</sup> The Bureau of Statistics divides the GDP in 'agriculture', 'industry', 'service' and 'import duty'. Industry is subdivided in 'mining and quarrying', 'manufacturing', 'electricity, gas and water supply, and construction. Data on 'manufacturing industries' of greater Rangpur is mentioned in Annexure-1.



Fig 2-2: Proportion of agricultural labour households



Source: Zug S (2006), Monga, Seasonal food insecurity in Bangladesh- Understanding the problem and strategies to combat it

Although Greater Rangpur is a food surplus area, agriculture cannot provide enough employment for the big agricultural labour force. This leads to a very low wage rate in Greater Rangpur. In 2004, daily average wage in greater Rangpur was only 68 percent of the average wage rate in Bangladesh. A major reason for the low employment opportunities is the lack of agricultural diversification. Agricultural production in the region is mainly based on paddy, while labour intensive high-value crops like vegetables are only rarely cultivated.

Generally, Monga occurs between transplantation and harvest of aman paddy. Demand of agricultural labor becomes substantially low this time. In the process of paddy cultivation there are mainly two periods, when a big labour force is needed. Some thirty days after the seedlings have been sown on a very small field, they have to be transplanted to a big field. Within about one week lots of work has to be done for ploughing the field several times, for levelling and for the transplantation of the seedlings. The second labour intensive step is the harvest which gives work for cutting, transporting and husking. In



between transplantation and harvest, intercrop activities can only provide limited labour. Fertilizer and possible pesticide application needs nearly no labour. One to two times weeding is the only step in-between, which can employ a significant number of people some 20 to 30 days after transplantation. So, household dependent on agriculture find their pre-harvest purchasing power dropping drastically due to a rise in prices of food staples coupled with a fall in local labour demand and wages. This causes miserable condition of the whole agriculture predominant society.

### **2.4.3 Limited Industrialization**

There has been a major change in the agro-industry dependency in Northern Bangladesh over the last two decades. Structural adjustment has led to the closure of agro based industries which has resulted in creation of industrial unemployment on one hand and turning the land into mono-crop on the other. Thus, the grim situation of both agriculture and industrialization has marked the characteristics of North Bengal economy with unemployment and hardcore poverty.

Tobacco processing is the main industry in greater Rangpur, which provide significant employment opportunity. In addition, so far five small private sector jute mills, mostly set up with old machinery of closed state-owned industries in Narayanganj, are running profitably. These are located in Rangpur, Kurigram, Nilphamari and Panchagarh providing employment to more than 3000 workers. It is known that about 15000 jute bags are needed a day in northern Bangladesh just for storing and trans-shipping paddy. It may be mentioned here that jute is harvested during the monsoon season (July- August) and right after this season monga crisis follows. At this time, the raw jute can find a stable market in the local jute mills as well as create alternative employments.

The economic potentials of the small sale industries underscore very much the need for dependable energy supply. The failure of most BSCIC areas to develop local industries in the northern districts is glaring examples of energy crisis. Even the EPZ in Saidpur (in Nilphamari districts) are yet to yield desired benefit in terms of industrial expansion and labour utilization. The Jamuna multi-purpose bridge connects the entire north and

northwestern Bangladesh with other regions through good highway and railway link, but facilitates gas transmission only up to Bogra. The gas network may also be extended to various growth centers of northern Bangladesh to facilitate farm, non-farm and industrial activities.

#### **2.4.4 Unstable Labour market**

Most of the people in Monga region are employed in normal time. During Monga, employment opportunities reduce on average 50 percent and wage rate drops by 50 percent. This drastic income deficit has extreme negative impact in the livelihood of the poor people. This dynamics of labour market is the main causes of monga.

##### **2.4.4.1 Sectoral distribution of Employment**

Economic activities of monga region is not diverse, mainly depend on agriculture. Unfortunately, agriculture shows little diversification characterized by mono-cropping, particularly depend on paddy. Scope of non-farm activities is very limited. Due to the low industrial base of the region, job in industry is also scarce. Sectoral distribution of employment is mentioned below:



**Table 2-4: Sectoral distribution of employment in Monga region**

Sector	Percentage
Field crop (own + lease + mortgage)	6.67
Share crop	10.22
Homestead crop	0.44
Agriculture labour	52.00
Non agriculture wage labour	13.78
Rickshaw / Van pulling	12.44
Fishing	4.44
Maid	8.89
Classified profession (cobbler, barber, etc.)	1.78
Salary from work as labour	2.67
Petty business	11.11
Handicrafts	0.89
Livestock rearing	4.44
Poultry rearing	9.33
Begging	0.44
Urban remittance	0.89
International remittance	0.44
Vegetable seed/saplings	0.89
Fruit Cultivation	0.89
Garments worker	1.33
Financial help of neighbours	7.56
Other	4.44

Source: Social Development Foundation (2008), Impact Evaluation of Monga Mitigation Initiative Pilot Programme (MMIPP-II)

#### **2.4.4.2 Employment drop during Monga**

Employment opportunities drop drastically during Monga. Most of the agricultural labour remains unemployed between post-plantation and pre-harvest of aman paddy. Many labourers cannot earn enough money from agricultural employment for covering their basic

needs. The shrinkage of employment opportunity during monga is shown in the following table:

**Table 2-5: Employment opportunities drop in Monga**

District/ Upazila	Work-days per week in normal time	Work-days per week in Monga
<b>Nilphamari</b>		
Jaldhaka	6.11	2.62
Domar	5.27	4.36
Dimla	5.9	3.86
<b>Kurigram</b>		
Rajarhat	6.81	2.83
Ulipur	6.91	2.50
Chilmari	6.52	2.29
<b>Gaibandha</b>		
Saghata	5.62	2.67
Fulchari	5.33	0.62
Sundarganj	5.29	1.14

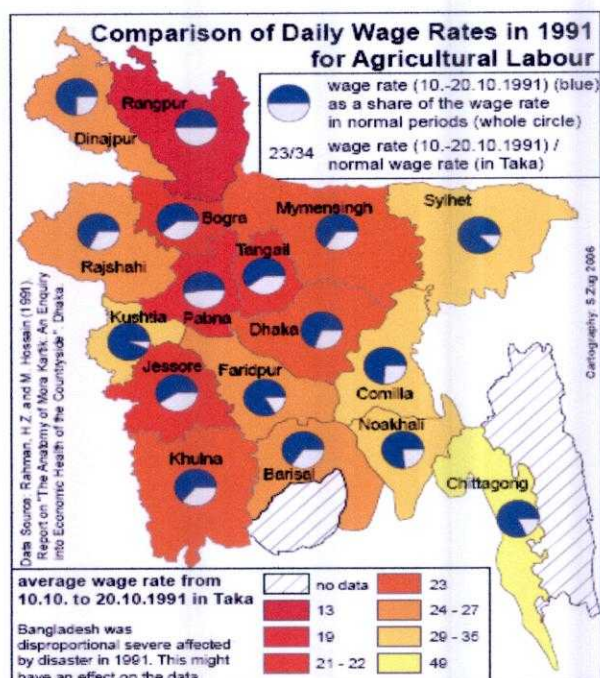
Source: Rahman H Z; Monga Forecast 2005: Field Assessment and Action Plan, Poverty and Participation Research Centre

#### 2.4.4.3 Wage Rate drop

Significant seasonal variation in agricultural wages was prevalent in nearly all regions of Bangladesh. For Bangladesh as a whole there was an average drop of 30 percent in the daily wage rate. The decline was biggest in greater Rangpur. Day-labourers earned only half of the money they usually earn. Rahman reviewed this data in 2005: “One of the important changes which has taken place over the 1990-2005 periods is the general reduction of the seasonal poverty problem across Bangladesh and its continued persistence in the ecologically vulnerable parts of northern districts” (Zug S., 2006).



**Fig 2-3: Comparison of daily wage rate for agricultural labour and its decline during seasonal shock**



Source: Zug S (2006), Monga, Seasonal food insecurity in Bangladesh- Understanding the problem and strategies to combat it

Recently, a benchmark survey on monga affected areas in Northern Bangladesh conducted by MongaMUKTA Bangladesh Prochar Obhijan Secretariat (Monga free Bangladesh Campaign Secretariat), a joint initiative of Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad and Actionaid Bangladesh shows that monthly household income is significantly dropped in Monga.

**Table 2-6: Income drop during Monga**

Monthly Income (Tk.)	During monga months (percent of households)	During non-monga months (percent of households)
Up to 1000	20.1	3
1001-2000	48	17.9
2001-3000	19.5	35.9
3001-5000	8	31.5
5001-7000	2	6.5
7001-10000	1.2	2.8
10001-15000	0.9	1.5
15001-20000	0.2	0.5
20001 and above	0.1	0.3

### **2.4.5 Market Failure**

Several symptoms of market failure can be recognized during monga, which are mentioned in the following:

- Seasonal Unemployment
- Limited competition
- Incomplete market
- Inflation

#### **2.4.5.1 Seasonal Unemployment**

The most widely recognized symptom of market failure in monga region is the seasonal episode of high unemployment. Employment opportunities in agriculture reduce on average 50 percent during monga. Many of the workers cannot earn enough money to survive their livelihood.

#### **2.4.5.2 Limited Competition**

In greater Rangpur, there are relatively few resource-rich people, who could be a major source of crisis period borrowing. The number of moneylenders and the amount of money that can be lent out is therefore limited. During monga many people need to take a loan, but the supply is not able to cover the demand. This leads to limited competition and makes it possible for the moneylenders to take high interests.

#### **2.4.5.3 Incomplete Market**

The failure of micro-credit market poses a serious problem. NGOs offer micro-credit to moderate poor generally, because they can repay the credit. So, extreme poor has very limited access to micro-credit due to the lack of guarantee of repayment. This is the sign of incomplete market. So, the extreme poor are compelled to turn to monopolistic

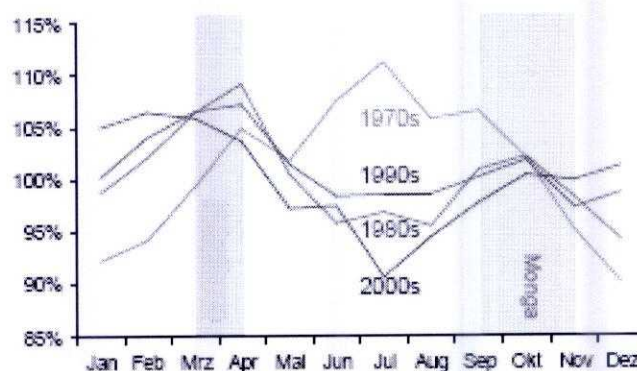


informal money lenders. Similarly, poor infrastructure, limited market access and other problem of living remote areas exacerbate the monga situation.

#### 2.4.5.4 Inflation

Adverse market dynamics worsen the situation during monga. The disproportionate price hike of essentials created an additional vulnerability. The price of rice usually increases until harvest and vegetables are very expensive as it is off-season.

**Fig 2-4: Seasonality of price of coarse rice**



Source: Zug S (2006), Monga, Seasonal food insecurity in Bangladesh- Understanding the problem and strategies to combat it

Figure 2-4 shows two annual peaks for the rice price since the 1980s. These peaks are prior to the harvest of aman and boro. According to the data the price is higher during the March- April than during monga. This can be explained by the higher yield of boro which results in a higher availability after the harvest leading to a bigger decrease of price. Data from the 1970s shows a completely different pattern with the peak in the rice price in July. The increase in cultivation of boro relative to aman and aus is the major factor behind these changes in seasonality. As the price of rice rises during monga, local people spend a major proportion of their income for purchasing rice. So, fluctuations in the price of rice have therefore direct impact on the amount of rice a family can consume.

In some years the increase in prices of rice and other essentials is stronger than in others. The yearly variations in the price hike is an outcome of complex interaction between natural calamities that damage crops and bring down the targeted crop production, artificial food crisis due to hoarding of food grain by the private traders and government interventions to stabilize prices etc.

In times of shortage people try to sell various things they have, to obtain money for consumption. They have a high pressure to sell, as they need the money urgently. Therefore, they often accept a lower price than the usual market price.

So, 4 conditions of market failure such as- unemployment, limited competition, incomplete market and inflation prevail during monga.

#### **2.4.6 Political factor**

##### **2.4.6.1 Lack of political patronage**

In a political system that is based on patronage, it is important for the development of one region that representatives of that region are also represented in the government to advocate for the region. Many people in Greater Rangpur are still affiliated with the former President General Ershad and his party has a stronghold in the region<sup>9</sup>. In the parliamentary elections in 1991, 1996, 2001 and 2008 candidates from his party won most of the respective regional constituencies. The 1991 election was won by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, who formed an informal coalition with Jamaat-e- Islami. But no single constituency in greater Rangpur was won by the coalition and therefore nobody represented this region in the government. The same happened during the rule of Bangladesh Awami Legue from 1996 to 2001. In 2001, 5 of 22 seats won by Bangladesh Nationalist Party or Jaamat-e-Islami were still very low. In 2008, Bangladesh Awami Legue achieved landslide victory nationally (230 seats out of 300), but they won only half of the constituencies of the region (11 seats out of 22).

<sup>9</sup> In 1991 his party won 17, in 1996, 21, in 2001, 13 and in 2008, 11 of 22 constituencies in greater Rangpur.



#### 2.4.6.2 Political debate

Monga or seasonal food insecurity is not a new phenomenon in rural Bangladesh, but the topic just started to catch public interest in the recent years. Pushed by the media, it became part of the political debate between the government and opposition parties.

The opposition regularly blames the government for not taking sufficient steps to address monga. While the government was hosting the SAARC meeting in November 2005 the opposition leader Sheikh Hasina attacked the government for not taking monga seriously: *I also request the government headed by Prime Minister to visit immediately the monga-affected districts of the region.* She attacked the government concerning the costly decoration of Dhaka City for the meeting: *Had the government allocated a portion of the money spent for such a gorgeous illumination, the acute poverty-hit people of the northern region would have got a meal.* Awami League and other opposition parties frequently carried out own relief programs in the 'monga region'.

Likewise also the government uses monga to show that their programs are successfully tackling monga. The governmental *National News Agency of Bangladesh* (BSS) quoted official sources during monga 2005 as saying that *adequate steps taken by the government [in form of an] adequate supply of food grains helped the people to overcome the monga in all the districts of greater Rangpur. [...] So-called 'Monga' exists only in the media reports now-a-days.*

#### 2.4.7 Land Ownership pattern

Land is unevenly distributed in the Monga-prone areas. In Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Gaibandha and Nilphamari, 30.17, 22.72, 10.89 and 23.85 percent people are landless in absolute term respectively. According to government definition of landless (who hold land up to 5 decimal), the percentage of landless is more. 58.17, 62.33, 65.37 and 72.39 percent people are landless in Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Gaibandha and Nilphamari respectively. Most of the land belongs to the few elites, who control the social structure. This uneven distribution of land is also a critical factor of Monga.

**Table 2-7: Land ownership in greater Rangpur**

Land Size (decimal)	District			
	Lalmonirhat N=102,936 (Percent)	Kurigram N=154,609 (Percent)	Gaibandha N=126,089 (Percent)	Nilphamari N=57,063 (Percent)
No land	30.17	22.72	10.89	23.85
Up to 5	28.00	39.61	54.48	48.54
5-10	15.25	16.64	15.43	11.96
10-20	10.78	9.98	8.17	6.93
20-30	7.60	3.85	3.25	4.54
30-40	3.62	3.96	4.76	1.98
40-50	3.57	2.31	1.80	1.73
More than 50	1.01	0.93	1.23	0.47

Sources: National Seminar on Monga, January 2-3, 2008 organized by: Institute of Microfinance and Palli Karma- sahayak Foundation

#### 2.4.8 The lagging Char lands

A special underdevelopment of char<sup>10</sup> lands and the flood and erosion affected mainland, which forms a reasonable proportion of Greater Rangpur, contributes to the underdevelopment of the region. In addition, the chars in northern Bangladesh belong to the poorest settlement areas in whole Bangladesh. As land rights are very complicated, and the land administration is very corrupted, poor people often lose their land to the powerful. Moreover, people living in the char continuously struggle for their livelihood. Those who have more capacity leave and nearly only the rural poor, living from agricultural day-labouring, share cropping and share raring for absentee landlords, remain. Alternative income sources are even scarcer than on the mainland. There are no brickfields, less paddy processing, very limited construction and road works, no rickshaws and only few possibilities for business activities.

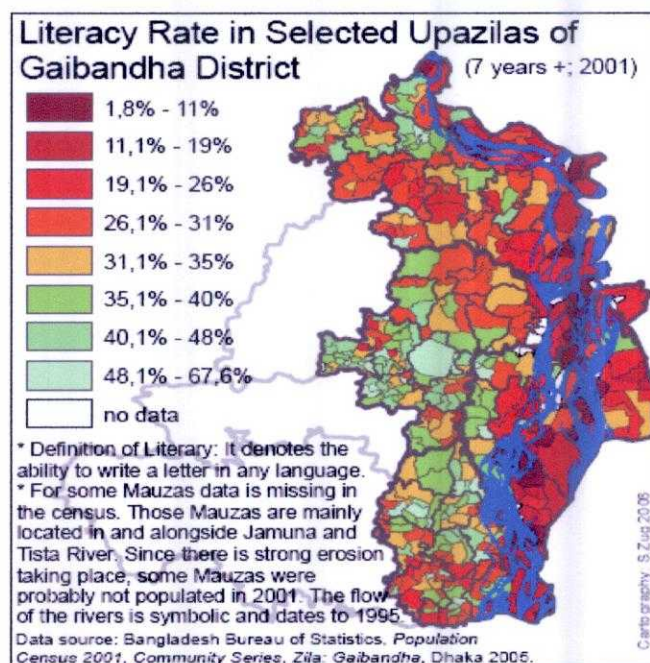
<sup>10</sup>Char means Island in the river formed of alluvial sediments



As Jamuna river mainly deposits unfertile coarse sands in the northern districts and fertile smaller materials further south, the agriculture on the northern chars is even worse than on other chars in Bangladesh. Fertility increases if the char got older and finer materials deposited. Harvest is often lower than on the main land and irrigation is only possible to a very limited extent because the sandy soils have only a very low water carrying capacity and dry out very fast. Although the cropping intensity in 'the monga districts' is very high, much char land in these districts is only single cropped. Agriculture is for these reasons less profitable and more risky on northern char land than on the mainland, especially the areas above flood level.

The access of people to different services is very weak. Government service like education, health care, agricultural extension, electrification or information is not or only very limited available on the chars. Figure 2-5 illustrates this problem concerning the level of literacy in Gaibandha districts. The literacy rate for those living on char land is mainly below the rate for the mauzas on the mainland.

**Fig 2-5: Literacy in selected upazilas of Gaibandha districts**



Source: Zug S (2006), Monga, Seasonal food insecurity in Bangladesh- Understanding the problem and strategies to combat it

The access to government services on the mainland, to the markets and to alternative employment opportunities is more difficult for the people from the chars, as many chars are very remote and it takes a lot of time and also money to reach the mainland (Zug S.; 2006).

#### **2.4.9 Natural Disasters**

The people of the Monga-prone areas mostly suffer from three major types of natural disasters. These are: flood, river bank erosion and drought. Some other damages, like post winter dry spell and land degradation are also found. Natural disasters greatly contribute to create famine-like situation in two ways: through destruction of food stocks and whatever assets the households on the margin of poverty have, and by making employment scarce.

##### **2.4.9.1 Flood**

The flash flood of September and October mostly affect the monga-prone areas. Heavy and prolonged rainfall occurring locally or outside the country may also results floods along the Teesta, Brahmaputra-Jamuna and Ganges rivers.



**Box 2-1: Selected major floods associated with the Monga in Northern Bangladesh, 1879-2007**

1879: Flooding of the Teesta when the change in the course of the Brahmaputra began.

1955: Flood peak of the Jamuna river at Shirajgonj in August was 14.22 m. affected upper Jamuna basin.

1988: Catastrophic flood occurred in August-September inundated about 82000 sq. km (about 60 percent of total area). The flood lasted 15 to 20 days.

1994: Localized flood during August- September along Brahmaputra-Jamuna river.

1998: Over two-thirds of the total area of country was flooded, comparable with the catastrophic flood of 1988 so far as the extent of flooding concern. The flood lasted for more than two months.

2007: Two spells of flood- in July and September destroying almost entire Aman seedling nurseries and paddy fields in Northern Bangladesh.

#### **2.4.9.2 River Erosion**

Many monga-prone areas are typically located along the Teesta and the Brahmaputra-Jamuna rivers. These are regularly affected by bank erosion. The riverbank erosion not only devours crops but also the land itself. This may deprive cultivators of their homes and their basic means of livelihood.

Research was mainly done on Jamuna river, as it is Bangladesh's river with the largest annual discharge before it joins with Ganges. Jamuna is a very young river. Up to the 18th century the main waters coming to Bangladesh from the north were flowing through the basin of today's Old Brahmaputra. Jamuna grew bigger and transports now the major waters. The process of widening is not finished yet. In 1992 Jamuna was on average 11.2 km wide and widened on average 184 meter per year in the period from 1983 to 1992. This data refers to the whole Jamuna river, but satellite images show, that erosion in greater Rangpur District is roughly the same. As widening of Jamuna takes place, more

*chars* emerge in the river, but the *char* area is not growing equally to the loss of mainland. Altogether there is a loss in quantity and as the *chars* are less fertile also in quality of land. After its avulsion 200 years ago, the Jamuna river grasped nearly 260,000 hectors of land and only in the last 28 years it destroyed about 70,000 hectors of land. It implies that only in the last few decades, the river displaced hundred thousands of people (Zug S., 2006).

For the individual person erosion can lead to a loss of homestead and agricultural land which is the major productive asset in rural areas. People are often displaced several times in their lives. It is not only a loss of material assets, people have to start to build up new social relationships. It is more difficult for displaced people to enter into relationship with a patron for share-cropping, money-lending, or employment, as they are not known to the patrons in the beginning. The affects of erosion are a reason for the poverty of the individual. But as erosion affects a huge proportion of the population along the river, this is also a major reason why poverty in general is more prevalent there. A higher degree of poverty that is partly caused by erosion results in a higher vulnerability to seasonal poverty or monga.

#### **2.4.9.3 Drought**

The drought-prone areas typically include the north and northwest part of Bangladesh where the mean annual rainfall and short length of rainy season impose restriction on agricultural production, and where soil has no capacity to restore moisture. The drought environment is further aggravated by the cross boundary anthropogenic interventions. About 55 rivers that flow through Bangladesh actually come from India. Most of these trans-boundary rivers enter into the country along the northwestern regions. The natural flow of these rivers is interrupted by upstream withdrawal of water for economic and household uses as well as for construction of water management structures by the concern country. The effect on these structures obstructs the normal flow of water in rivers such as the Ganges (at Farakka), the Punarbhaba (just beyond Banglabandha) and the Teesta. These structures mostly divert dry season flow of the rivers, which create not



only a scarcity of surface water in northwestern Bangladesh, but also tend to affect negatively the recharge of groundwater in these regions. Ultimately it leads to moisture loss in a vast area and contributes to drought condition in northwestern region of the country.

During the last 50 years, these parts of Bangladesh suffered 20 times from drought conditions. The 1973-drought was one of the severest in the last century and was responsible for the 1974-local famine in northern Bangladesh.

#### **Box 2-2: Selected droughts in Northern Bangladesh, 1951-1995**

1951: Severe drought in northwest Bangladesh and substantially reduced rice production.

1973: One of the severest in the last century and was responsible for the 1974- famine in northern Bangladesh

1989: Most of the rivers in northwestern Bangladesh dried up and most districts (mainly Nilphamari and Thakurgoan) experienced top soil deterioration and dust syndrome.

1994-95: This drought was followed by that of 1995-96, regarded as most persistent drought in northwestern Bangladesh, damaged rice and jute crops as well as perennial crops, like bamboo and betel nut.

## **2.5 Consequences of Monga**

There are several consequences of monga which affect the individual family, the community and the whole region.

### **2.5.1 Asset transfer**

In the time of crises people have the possibility to transform some assets into money to cover their daily expenses. It is reported that families sold or took a mortgage on their land. This strongly reduces their livelihood capacity for the future because land is the most important productive asset in rural areas. In this area also livestock, trees and bamboo was sold, mainly below the normal market price.

### **2.5.2 Money-lending**

Money-lending is a common strategy used by the poor during the monga period to allocate money for covering basic needs. People in this region have little access to formal short-term loans. They have to use the services of informal moneylenders. The moneylenders know about the problematic situation of the monga affected people and they can therefore profit from their vulnerability by taking very high interest rates. In various reports on monga, different conditions for money-lending were mentioned. Mainly, two types were predominant. During normal times people can receive loans with 10 percent interest per month from local moneylenders.

During the months of Ashwin and Kartik people can often only receive loans with even worse conditions. If they take a loan of Tk. 500, they mostly have to pay back Tk. 500 and one mound<sup>11</sup> of paddy which was worth some Tk. 350-400 during harvest of aman in 2005. It can be assumed that the people take the loan for about 3 months. In this case they pay a monthly interest rate of about 25 percent. If they take the loan closer towards the end of monga this monthly interest rate is even higher. A lot of people did not manage to pay back their loans or paid back only part of it after harvest. Some were pressured to give another mound of paddy while others had or still have to pay a regular monthly interest rate of 10 percent. This traditional money lending system is extremely erosive.

### **2.5.3 Advance sale of harvest and labour**

Most of the people know that they will have income during the coming harvest. They either expect yield or employment. Some people try to sell these future potentials. Farmers sold one mound of paddy for 175-200 taka in advance during Monga, which was worth about 350 taka during the following harvest period. Agricultural day-labourers often sell working days in the harvest period in advance. Labourers receive about 40 taka, if they sell their labour in advance. The wage rate during harvest is about 70 taka.

<sup>11</sup> Mound means unit of measure of weight in rural area. 1 mound is equal to 37.3 kg in the most regions in Bangladesh. In Sunderganj, one of the upazila of Gaibandha, 1 mound is equal to 42 kg.



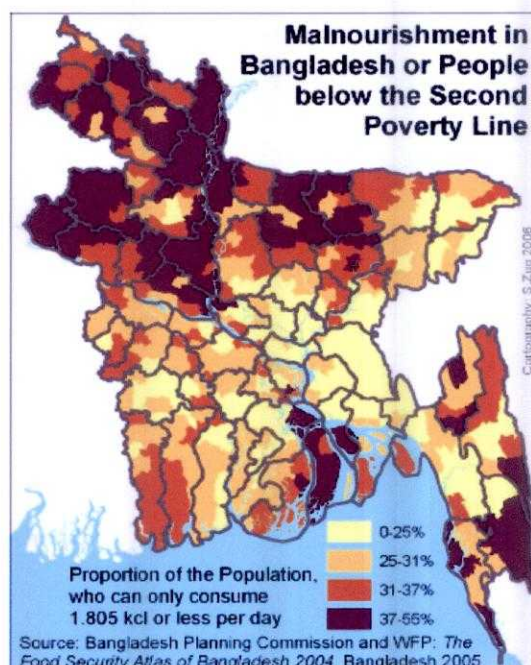
It is obvious that these systems of advanced sale of labour and harvest are very exploitative. The poor people mostly have no other choice, than to accept their conditions, as they do not have lot alternatives to allocate money from other sources.

Advanced sale of labour and harvest prolong the time of shortage of the poor, as for them monga is not finished when harvest starts. They either have to use most of their money for repaying loans or they do not earn from the yield they produce or the work they are doing, because they were already paid before. In addition, the alarming situation is that the tradition of advanced sale of labour may lead to bounded labour.

#### 2.5.4 Chronic Malnutrition

Monga leads to seasonal food insecurity in greater Rangpur. It is not the problem of availability of food, but the problem of accessibility. To cope with Monga, people are used to starve, skip meal or take inferior or rotten foods, which cause malnutrition in the long run.

Fig 2-6: Proportion of malnourished people



Source: Zug S (2006), Monga, Seasonal food insecurity in Bangladesh- Understanding the problem and strategies to combat it

Monga leads to occasional starvation to consumption rationing. Consumption ordering by district in Greater Rangpur is mentioned in the following table:

**Table 2-8: Consumption ordering by district in Greater Rangpur**

District	Monga time: Consumption Ordering (Percent)			Normal time: Consumption Ordering (Percent)		
	Occasional Starvation	Consumption Rationing	Three full meals	Occasional Starvation	Consumption Rationing	Three full meals
Lalmonirhat (2005 & 2006)	26.17	60.36	13.47	2.32	32.89	64.78
Kurigram (2006 & 2007)	53.52	44.69	1.79	10.97	61.68	27.35
Gaibandha (2006 & 2007)	47.71	50.94	1.35	2.17	48.50	49.33
Nilphamari (2006 & 2007)	48.22	49.29	2.49	14.37	55.00	30.63

Sources: National Seminar on Monga, January 2-3, 2008 organized by: Institute of Microfinance and Palli Karma- sahayak Foundation

Peoples have been suffered from malnutrition year after year, generation after generation. Their physical capabilities decrease in a long term and they become more exposed to diseases in short term. This argument probably explains the myth that the people of monga region are reluctant to work.

### 2.5.5 Coping Strategies

To fight Monga, the households of this region implement different ex-ante and ex-post coping strategies. These can be categorized into three- internal coping mechanism, external support mechanism and migration. Internal coping mechanisms include advance sale of labour, advance sale of crop, asset sale and borrowing from informal sources. They are the most potent source of cash liquidity available to the households. Although



the households realize that they will be worse off in future, the need of quick cash compels them to adopt internal mechanism. External support mechanisms include supports provided by governmental and non- governmental sources.

The coping mechanisms can be divided into two from the perspective of long-run impact-erosive and non-erosive. Erosive coping strategies include internal coping mechanisms, which are resource depleting and largely non-productive. On the other hand, external support, consumption and income smoothing activities are non-erosive in nature. Different coping mechanisms adopted by the households are mentioned below:

**Table 2-9: Coping mechanisms adopted by the households**

<b>Coping Strategy</b>	<b>Kurigram (Percent)</b>	<b>Lalmonirhat (Percent)</b>	<b>Gaibandha (Percent)</b>	<b>Nilphamari (Percent)</b>
Advance labour sale	1.56	6.29	1.46	10.41
Advance crop sale	0.18	1.3	0.48	1.06
Asset Sale	15.26	13.60	12.35	12.67
Savings	30.67	28.16	42.95	25.80
Migration	40.79	24.75	40.20	49.78
Borrow (MFI)	29.05	9.90	2.32	23.99
Borrow (Individual)	6.81	25.28	4.61	17.02
VGD	1.47	11.31	5.59	1.61
Old Pension	1.32	3.20	1.70	1.87
Livestock Support	0.72	0.88	0.51	0.84
Clothing Support	1.93	2.91	0.61	4.28
Food Support	28.11	39.93	27.95	20.77
Housing Equipment Support	0.14	0.45	0.15	0.51
Cash Support	2.40	0.77	0.92	2.65

Source: Shahrar T M and Khalily M A B, Coping Strategies of the poor and Vulnerability in greater Rangpur: What matters most? National Seminar on Monga, January 2-3, 2008 organized by: Institute of Microfinance and Palli Karma- sahayak Foundation

The patterns of mechanisms used are quite similar in various districts. The major mechanism employed throughout the region is migration. Unemployment, landlessness etc. are the main reasons for migration.

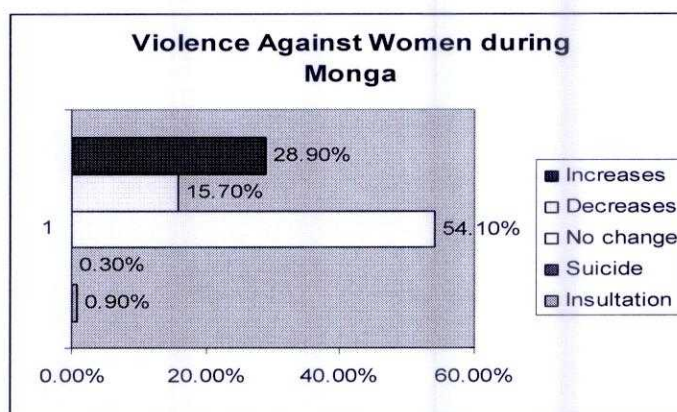
Despite an understanding of upcoming hardship and shock, the households in the region are forced to implement resource erosive coping strategies to combat the upcoming

monga. This can indicate two things, firstly, a lack of proper supply of formal insurance mechanisms and secondly, market failure. So, policy considerations should be made not only to provide adequate insurance mechanisms in the region but also to address the issue of market failure. Employment generation (with or without social safety net program) is one of the important way to provide adequate insurance and address market failure.

### 2.5.6 Violence against women

Monga has been considered as social disaster rather than social problem. Absence of men over the period of 2-3 months due to migration brings endless suffering for women. Rich people always take the opportunity to harass poor women at the time of relief distribution or while providing any kind of support. Lack of security is a major concern especially at night because “bad guys” often knocked their doors and search for scope to harass women. A benchmark survey on monga affected areas in Northern Bangladesh conducted by MongaMUKTA Bangladesh Prochar Obhijan Secretariat (Monga free Bangladesh Campaign Secretariat), a joint initiative of Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad and Actionaid Bangladesh, shows that violence against women increases significantly during Monga.

**Fig 2-7: Violence against women during monga**





## CHAPTER THREE

### **3.0 Theoretical Framework**

#### **3.1 Monga and the Entitlement Approach**

Amartya Sen's work on the causes of famines can be viewed as an application of the entitlement approach to a real world situation. The entitlement approach to famine-like situation such as monga concentrates on the ability of people to command food through legal means available in the society, including the use of production possibilities, trade opportunities, entitlements vis-à-vis the state, and other method of acquiring food. A person starves either because he does not have the ability to command enough food, or because he does not use this ability to avoid starvation. The entitlement approach concentrates on the former, ignoring the latter possibility.

##### **3.1.1 The Entitlement Approach**

The entitlement approach is based on three conceptual categories, namely,

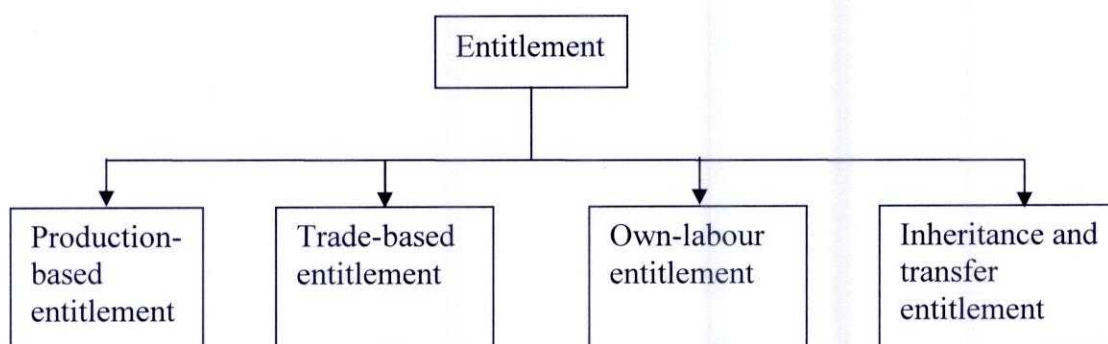
- The Endowment Set
- The Entitlement Set
- The Entitlement Mapping

The endowment set is defined as the combination of all those legally owned resources by a person conforming to established norms and practices. The resources include both

tangible assets, such as land, equipment, animals and intangibles such as knowledge and skill, labour power, or membership of a particular community.

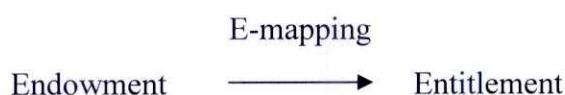
The entitlement set is defined as the set of all possible combinations of goods and services (not just the one actually being enjoyed) that a person can legally obtain by using the resources of his endowment set. In the context of poverty and famine, the entitlement approach aims comprehensively to describe all legal sources of food, which Sen reduces to four categories: “production-based entitlement” (growing food), “trade-based entitlement” (buying food), “own-labour entitlement” (working for food) and “inheritance and transfer entitlement” (being given food by others).

**Fig 3-1: Different forms of Entitlement**



The entitlement mapping, called E-mapping, is simply the relationship between endowment set and entitlement set. It is the rate at which the resources of the endowment set can be converted into goods and services included in the entitlement set. The E-mapping depends on the legal, political, economic and social characteristics of the society and the person's position on it.

The following diagram shows the relationship among the three basic concepts:





### **3.1.2 Entitlement Failure**

A person suffers from failure of food entitlement when his entitlement set does not contain enough food to enable him to avoid starvation in the absence of non-entitlement transfers, such as charity. A famine occurs when a large number of people within a community suffer from such entitlement failures at the same time. Since entitlement set is derived by applying E-mapping on the endowment set, the entitlement failure and thus famine can occur only through some adverse change either in endowment or E-mapping or both. This leads to the useful organizing principle that all possible causes of famines can be classified into two broad groups: one that affects the endowment set and the other that affects the entitlement mappings.

Noting that E-mapping consists of three different kinds of relations such as production, exchange and transfer, we can distinguish four types of famines caused due to either of the following reasons:

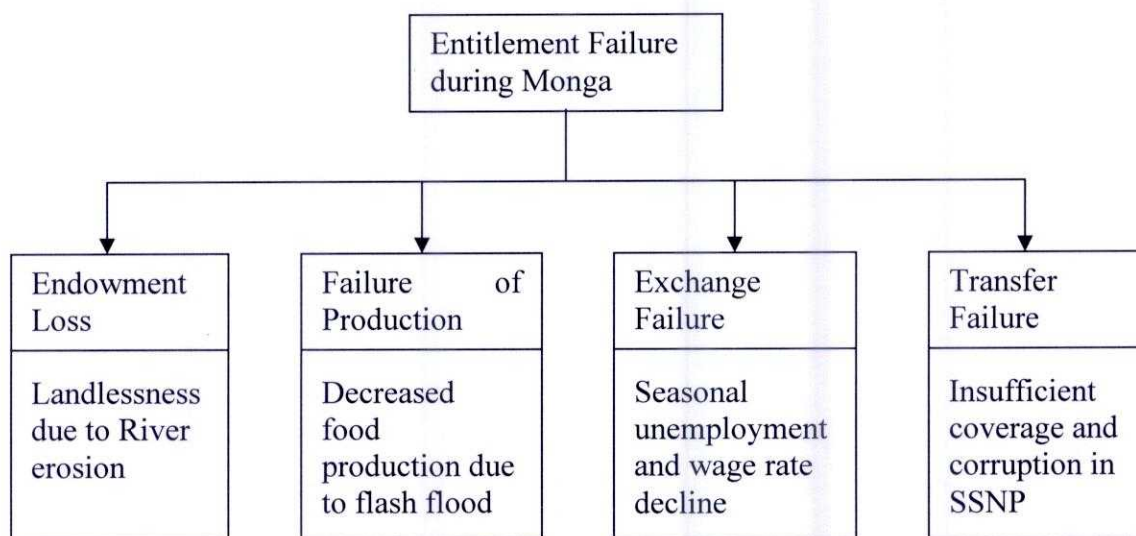
- Endowment Loss
- Failure of Production
- Exchange Failure
- Transfer Failure.

For people who do not rely primarily on exchange to obtain their staple food, entitlement failure would occur through the first two of the four channels. This case is described by Sen as direct entitlement failure. When exchange is involved, then any one of the first three channels may act as the conduit of entitlement failure. In all these cases, a trade entitlement failure will be said to have occurred.

Sen pointed out that hunger can exist even when there is no problem in availability of food in aggregate level. The same thing happens during monga. Although greater Rangpur is a food surplus area, there is cyclical existence of monga in the region. All four type of famine symptom can be observed during monga. River erosion causes

landlessness result in massive endowment loss. Intermittent hit of flood is one of the main reasons of decreased food production in the affected year. Seasonal unemployment and wage rate decline reduces the purchasing power of the poor, can be regarded as exchange failure. Exchange failure also includes exploitative asset transfer, money lending from informal sources, advanced sale of labour and harvest. Major transfer failures are insufficient coverage and corruption in Social Safety Net Program.

**Fig 3-2: Entitlement Failure during Monga**



### 3.1.3 Entitlement protection

Entitlement failures arise either from a decline in initial ownership or endowment or from a worsening of exchange possibilities through, for example, a decline in employment opportunities, a fall in wages, or a rise in food prices. Increasing landlessness had therefore contributed to the possibilities of entitlement failure. There was also the further issue of uncertainty of command over food when the survival of a person depended on trading non-food goods for foodstuffs. So, effective famine prevention called for much more than simply rushing food to the victims. It involved a network of decisions relating to diverse policy areas, such as the



generation of employment and incomes, the delivery of health care, the stabilization of food prices, and the rehabilitation of the rural economy. People's entitlement to food depended not only on the operation of economic forces, including market mechanisms, but also on political ones. Standards of legitimacy, operations of rights, and availability of actual opportunities were all relevant to the entitlement approach to food and hunger, which went beyond the narrow domain of traditional economics.

Entitlement protection therefore has many different facets. As Sen explained, the occupational characteristics of the affected population, the pattern of intra-family divisions, the structure of markets, the nature of co-operative village institutions, and the mobility of vulnerable groups are some of the numerous considerations that are relevant to the choice of a strategy of entitlement protection when a monga threatens. So, entitlement protection almost always call for 'mixed systems', involving the use of different instruments to provide direct or indirect support to all vulnerable groups. The provision of employment, perhaps with cash wages, combined with unconditional relief for the unemployable, can be identified as one of the most effective options to mitigate Monga.

### **3.2 Conceptual Framework of Food and Nutrition Security**

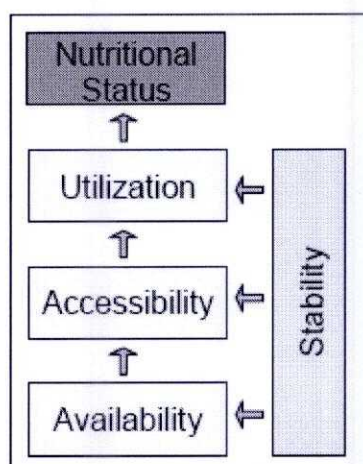
The manifestation of the phenomenon called monga is food and nutrition insecurity. To understand the causes of monga, a conceptual framework of food and nutrition security can give a guideline (Weingartner, 2005).

The achievement of sufficient nutritional status depends on the three factors availability, accessibility, and utilization of food. Availability is the physical existence of food. In this framework availability refers to the regional or national level and is a combination of food production, commercial food imports, food aid, and domestic food stocks.

Access is ensured, when the households and its members have sufficient resources to obtain those foods. This can be done through subsistence production or by gaining enough income to purchase on the market.

Utilization refers to the quality of the food consumed and how balanced it is concerning its nutrients. Utilization requires not only an adequate diet, but also the ability of the human body to convert it into energy, which is either used to undertake daily activities or stored. A healthy physical environment, including safe drinking water and an understanding of proper health care and food preparation is needed to ensure this ability.

**Fig 3-3: Framework of Food and Nutrition Security**



Source: Zug S (2006), Monga, Seasonal food insecurity in Bangladesh- Understanding the problem and strategies to combat it

Each of these three factors can vary in time. This temporal dimension is included in the framework as stability. A distinction can be made between chronic food insecurity – the inability to meet food needs on an ongoing basis – temporary food insecurity, when the inability is restricted to a specific shock like natural disaster or civil conflict and cyclical food insecurity, if there is a regular pattern to food insecurity every year.



Monga is a cyclical food insecurity which occurs during the lean season and it directly affects those who are involved in agricultural activities. The agriculture in 'the monga regions' is mainly based on paddy cultivation. The employment opportunities for agricultural day-laborers therefore mainly depend on seasonal labor requirements for this crop. In-between transplantation and harvest only little labor is needed and as a result the income of day-laborers is low. Like the agricultural laborers marginal farmers face monga, too. Their financial assets reduce towards the harvest. They have to give successive inputs to their fields, but they receive the return for their work not until after harvest. The financial resources of many marginal farmers are not enough to ensure the inputs for their crops and sufficient food for their families in the same time. Some groups or individuals are indirectly affected by the agricultural lean season. This is the case for all those who depend on the income of people affected by the agricultural lean season, like small traders and beggars. Due to the weak purchasing power they have no access to the market, i.e. they cannot buy enough food to fulfill their requirements. The access is sometimes further limited because the prices for basic foods often increase during monga.

Affected people reduce the quantity of nutritional intake. To compensate the common but comparatively expensive food, they consume cheap and sometimes unhygienic products and collect wild growing plants. This can cause problems for the utilization of food. The physical health of the people in the main monga period is already weakened through the preceding flood period when illnesses like diarrhea are very common. Diarrhea remains a problem during monga and worsens the situation because the limited amount of available food for the individual cannot be absorbed adequately by the body.

The availability of food in the understanding of the framework is no problem. A sufficient amount of food exists in Bangladesh and monga affected districts even produce a food surplus. Bangladesh as a whole is not self sufficient in food production in most years, but government and private commercial imports as well as international food aid ensures the availability on national level.

Monga differs every year in its severity because mainly accessibility and utilization vary in their stability. Agricultural production is underlying different natural risks, like early floods and heavy or late rains that can destroy crops and therefore also employment opportunities. Furthermore, the price fluctuations during monga differ. Interventions of the government and NGOs may have influence on the stability, too. Different programs rise income and enable the beneficiaries to access food on the markets.

In context of food and nutrition security, availability of food is not a problem during monga, but accessibility and utilization cannot reach in their stability.

### 3.3 The employment nexus between Growth and Poverty

The importance of employment in the context of poverty stems from the fact that poor people rely mainly on the use of their labour power for earning their livelihood. How much labour power they are able to use – i.e. the quantity of employment – is an important determinant of their income. Also important, however, is the return to labour with which they pursue their livelihood. Accordingly, broad categories of proximate causes of Monga can be distinguished: unemployment, underemployment and low returns to labour.

For growth to be able to reduce poverty fast, the nature of the growth process must be such that the forces creating unemployment, underemployment and low returns to labour are weakened. Whether this will happen or not depends on three sets of underlying factors: namely, the growth factor, the elasticity factor and the integrability factor.

- *The growth factor*: The rate at which the production potential expands, as represented by an upward shift of the production possibility frontier<sup>12</sup>.

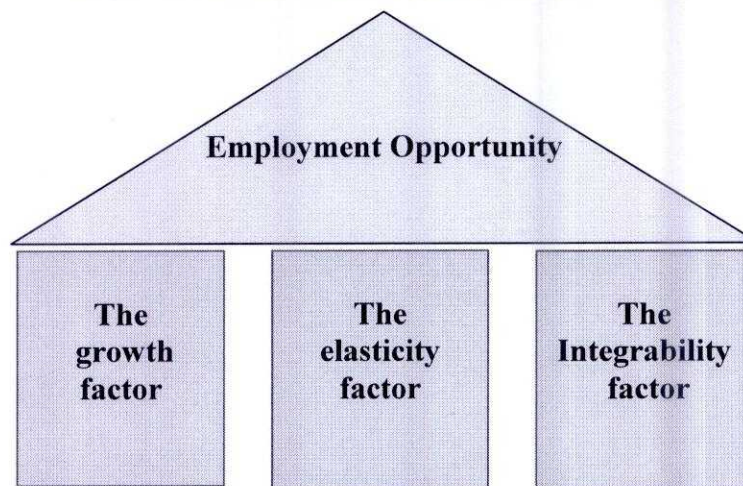
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<sup>12</sup> The production possibility frontier is a graph that shows the various combinations of output that the economy can possibly produce given the available factors of production and the available production technology that firms can use to turn these factors into output.



- *The elasticity factor*: The extent to which an upward shift of the production possibility frontier enhances the employment potential – the latter being defined as the scope for improving the quality and quantity of employment.
- *The integrability factor*: The extent to which the poor are able to integrate into economic processes so that, when growth occurs and the employment potential expands, they can take advantage of the greater scope for improving the quality and quantity of employment.

**Fig 3-4: Factors affecting Employment Generation**



When employment expands along with production, the benefits of growth will be widely shared. On the other hand, the poor must be well-equipped to take the advantage of the expansion of employment potential. Since all the 3 factors- namely, growth, elasticity and integrity, form the core of the employment nexus between growth and poverty reduction, this comprehensive approach may reasonably described as the employment focused strategy for poverty reduction. This approach is feasible for employment generation in Monga region.

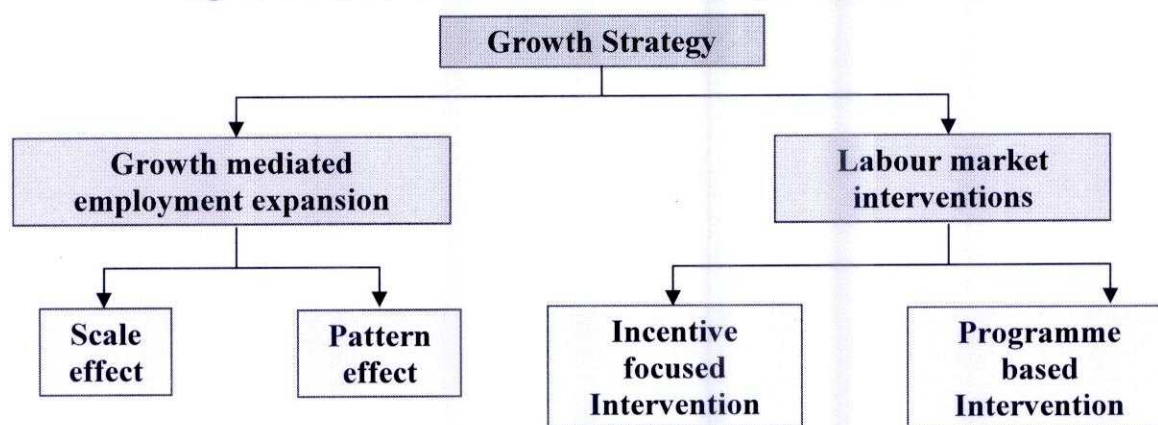
Now the question is how a growth strategy can be specified with the necessary employment orientation. To begin with, two different ways of expanding employment opportunities can be distinguished. These may be called 'growth-mediated employment expansion' and 'employment expansion through labour market interventions'. The former

refers to the expansion of employment that occurs through the growth process, while the latter refers to specific interventions in the labour market designed to create better employment outcomes.

Each of these categories can be further divided into two sub-categories. Growth mediated employment expansion can occur in two ways. The first, which may be called the 'scale effect', refers to the additional demand for labour that would occur if total output increased in a balanced manner with unchanged techniques of production. The second, which may be called the 'pattern effect', refers to the new demand for labour that can be created by changing the composition of output, the technique of production and relative prices and also by eliminating various market failures (e.g. creating self-employment through micro-credit) as part of the growth process.

Employment expansion through labour market interventions can also be of two types, depending on the nature of interventions. One set of interventions, which may be called 'incentive-focused interventions' are meant to improve the incentive of employers to hire more labour on the one hand and the incentive of labours. The second set of interventions, which may be called 'programme-based interventions', are meant to create new employment opportunities, for specific target groups, through publicly funded programmes (such as various public works programmes to be found almost everywhere).

**Fig 3-5: Theoretical Framework of Employment Generation**





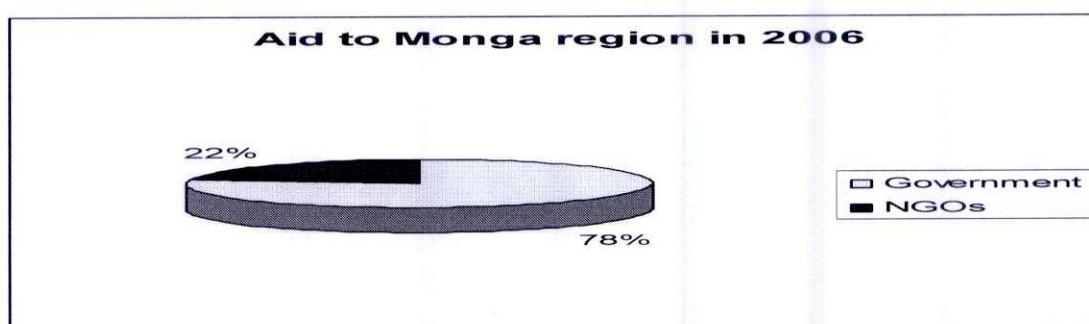
These alternative routes to employment expansion are very likely to have elements of both complementarity and trade-off with each other. How best to augment the complementarities on the one hand and soften the trade-offs on the other is an important challenge facing policy makers to mitigate monga (Osmani S.R; 2005).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4.0 Response of Government and Other agencies

The central government and Local government institutions, particularly Union Parishad authorities have taken initiatives to face the Monga situation in northern Bangladesh. Recently in National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction-II also addressed the issue. 100- Day employment generation programme undertaken by last caretaker government set the priority for the region. NGOs also provide micro-finance to the poor people. In 2006, total aid of Tk. 3370 million was given during Monga. Within it, 78 percent (Tk. 2660 million) was provided by government and rest 22 percent (Tk. 710 million) was provided by NGOs. The government has been trying to assist the affected people of monga by providing a US \$ 295 million which provides employment for two million heads of families for 75 days during the monga season.

**Fig 4-1: Aid to Monga region in 2006**



Source: Social Development Foundation and Neeti Gobeshona Kendro (2008); Government and Non-government initiatives to combat Monga: Seminar on Experience and Suggestions



## 4.1 Government's Support

During the last ten years, government has been taking some initiatives to support monga affected people such as distributing relief, VGF/VGD cards, and introducing Open Market Sell (OMS). At present, there exist two major programs for mitigation of Monga in Northern Bangladesh. These are:

- Temporary food support (i.e. VGF/VGD, OMS)
- Temporary employment generation (i.e. CFW or FFW)

### 4.1.1 Temporary food support

There are several types of food support to address monga such as, VGD, VGF and OMS. Although the VGD is not directly addressing monga, it generally reduces the vulnerability of the family towards food insecurity, provide 30 kg of rice for 18 months and especially during the critical lean seasons. Very few people received food support in the form of VGD.

**Table 4-1: Distribution of households by participation in VGD program in Greater Rangpur**

Have VGD card	District			
	Lalmonirhat N=102,936 (Percent)	Kurigram N=154,609 (Percent)	Gaibandha N=126,121 (Percent)	Nilphamari N=57,137 (Percent)
No	88.69	98.53	94.41	98.39
Yes	11.31	1.47	5.59	1.61

Sources: National Seminar on Monga, January 2-3, 2008 organized by: Institute of Microfinance and Palli Karma- sahayak Foundation

The aid received was inadequate and irregular, and the selection process for VGD, VGF was highly politicized. The programs were subject to serious influence and interference

by powerful elites at local level (RDRS, 2006). It is an open secret that a VGD card costs approximately a bribe of 1,000 taka, which the poorest cannot afford. In the distribution process frequently one or two kilograms are given less to cover the handling loss and the transportation cost of the Union Parishad. NGO employees, who are monitoring the activities of the Union Parishad, said that the weight is secretly further reduced (Zug S.; 2006).

VGD cards in the eye of a poor family are an asset, which brings regular profit. Women frequently sell the allowance in advance and Union Parishad accepts this system.

The second possibility to mitigate the situation for the vulnerable groups with a fast result is to improve their access to products from the market. The government has a system of Open Market Sales (OMS), which enables it to stabilize the prices of rice. The price usually increases towards harvest. The government sells rice to targeted people for a rate far below the market price. As price fluctuations mainly depend on demand and supply, the government can lower the rice price by increasing the supply through OMS and they can reduce the demand by giving relief. A low rice price increases people's ability to purchase rice.

There is a problem with OMS. The OMS center is usually far from the remote areas and it is very difficult for people, particularly women to reach the center. Very few of them have the capability to arrange transport or pay the transport fair to go to center.

#### **4.1.2 Temporary employment generation**

Another support activity is related to a short-term employment creation. The government carries out Cash for Work or Food for Work programs to build and maintain physical infrastructure and to raise common or individual grounds for flood protection. If one member of the family receives such an employment for a substantial period and earns some 50 to 70 taka per day, his family will probably not have to reduce their daily food



intake. Under Food for Work, people receive directly food instead of money, which can be an advantage during monga as food prices are high.

Various problems evolve with most of the short-term measures. They sometimes even deepen the difficulties to achieve long-term development. For a sustainable development it is important that people improve their livelihoods, in order not to be vulnerable towards seasonal shocks, or to build up their coping strategies. If people know that if the situation becomes difficult the government will provide them with Cash for Work or relief, they will probably not see a major need to develop coping strategies like accumulating savings. The so-called dependency syndrome can therefore destroy self motivation and it can create expectations concerning material values of beneficiaries towards government.

#### 4.2 NGO's program

NGOs have very little program except micro-finance or micro-credit to mitigate monga. It has been generally found that hardcore poor (characterized by landlessness, low asset base etc) are less benefited from participation in micro-finance program. If micro-finance does not contribute to the creation of assets for the extreme poor households, then it will create more liability for them. In most of the cases, micro-credit is not provided to the poorest section of the poor. Generally, micro-credit is given to the immediate poor people.

**Table 4-2: Membership of MFIs by district in greater Rangpur**

District	No membership (Percent)	Membership with MFI (Percent)
Lalmonirhat	62.46	37.54
Kurigram	66.64	33.36
Gaibandha	54.42	45.58
Nilphamari	74.34	25.66

Sources: National Seminar on Monga, January 2-3, 2008 organized by: Institute of Microfinance and Palli Karma- sahayak Foundation

If monga is assessed to be severe, many NGOs distribute food relief as well. During monga 2004, various national and international NGOs distributed mainly food packets consisting of grain, oil, salt and sugar.

There are some small scale programs organized by a number of international, national and local NGOs that focus on agricultural diversification, shelter, skill development, various enterprises, fisheries and awareness building, mentioned in the following.

**Table 4-3: NGO Activities in Northern Bangladesh, 2006**

<b>Projects</b>	<b>Activities &amp; Coverage</b>	<b>Funding Sources</b>
Char Livelihood Program (CLP)	Asset transfer, training, employment generation to 36,819 beneficiaries and 30,838 day laborers	DFID
Integrated Food Security (IFS)	Food for asset/work, food for training, saving accumulation to 18,400 ultra poor and blended food to 11,040 malnourished mother and children	GoB and WFP
Food Security for Vulnerable Group Development (FSVGD)	Training, saving accumulation, literacy and legal support and monthly 15 kg flour with Tk. 150 to 8,311 distressed women	EU & WFP
Hardcore Poor Credit Program (HPCP)	Tk. 139,979,500 credit for 29,434 poor households	PKSF
Programmed Initiative for Monga Eradication (PRIME)	Social mobilization, employment generation, asset transfer skill training, and credit to 7900 poor	PKSF
Monga Mitigation Initiatives Pilot Project (MMIPP-II)	Social mobilization, employment generation, asset transfer skill training, consumption credit and normal credit to 4,500 ultra-poor	SDF



Projects	Activities & Coverage	Funding Sources
Nutrition for Education Project (NEP)	Food support to 393,868 students round the year including Monga period	WFP
RDRS Enterprise Program	Training inmate making, bag making and stitching, embroidery and tailoring to 2,250 vulnerable woman	RDRS Core Fund
Early Rice Production Project (produce BRRI-33 using drum seeder)	Shifting of harvest period to 118-120 days from 145-150 days and early (one month ahead) rice production by 6,002 farmers	RDRS Core Fund (with WB, GoB, NGO)
Special Investment Program for Ultra Poor (STUP)	Targeted 3,777 ultra-poor families in greater Rangpur for cow and goat rearing and non-farm activities	BRAC
Micro-credit support for income generation	US\$ 15,14,600 (Tk. 98,9449,000) against various income generating activities (IGA) to 27,567 group members in greater Rangpur	TMSS
Monga Credit Program	Loan schemes ranging from Tk. 1000 to Tk. 3000 for one year with 10 percent interest rate per month for the poor ( interest free in special cases)	ASA
Poverty Alleviation Program	Worked with eight small, local organizations in Kurigram, Chilmari and Ulipur Upazilas distributing livestock, poultry etc., and trained some villagers in mechanical repair, nursery cultivation and sinking shallow tube wells.	ActionAid
Micro-credit Support and Skill Development	Extended loan in kind, micro-credit support, health support, skill development and training in disaster management	Islamic Relief

Projects	Activities & Coverage	Funding Sources
Training of Volunteers in Disaster	Identify and train volunteer animator (Ujjibak) in Monga affected areas of greater Rangpur involving UP chairman and members	Hunger Project

Source: Elahi K.M. and Ara I. (2008), Understanding Monga in Northern Bangladesh, Academic Press and Publishers Library

### 4.3 Financial Institution's activities

Funds for agricultural loan remained idle with commercial banks in four northern district but flood affected farmers show little interest for loans in Rabi season. RAKUB and Sonali Bank disbursed 28 and 23 percent respectively of the loan target in first half of the fiscal year 2007-2008 in these districts. The agricultural loan disbursement situation in the four districts of Northern Bangladesh for about six months of the Rabi season (2007-08) was as follows:

**Table 4-4: Agricultural loan disbursement situation in Northern Bangladesh**

Districts	Total allocation (million Tk.)	Disbursed amount (million Tk.)
<b>RAKUB</b>		
Rangpur	75.90	27.28
Gaibandha	46.70	11.59
Kurigram	42.70	12.89
Nilphamari	44.15	10.73
<b>Sonali Bank</b>		
Rangpur	5.25	1.93
Gaibandha	7.39	4.86
Kurigram	6.14	2.33
Nilphamari	5.91	1.14

Source: Elahi K.M. and Ara I. (2008), Understanding Monga in Northern Bangladesh, Academic Press and Publishers Library



Despite the low interest rate (8 percent), the lengthy and cumbersome procedure of credit administration and alleged harassment for repayment of earlier loan push the people turn to informal money lender (with higher interest rate). To get loan, farmers have to deposit up-to-date land documents for which they have to face hassle at Union land revenue and district land record offices. Besides, a section of corrupt bank employees demand commission, it is alleged. Recently, many farmers were arrested or harassed for defaulting on loan repayment and many others are on the run as banks have lodged cases against defaulters.

#### **4.4 General problems of Monga mitigation effort**

As stated in a RDRS (2006) report: *‘Despite the presence of many development actors in the northern region (NGOs, government, donor agencies and private enterprises) some of whom are engaged in aspects of Monga mitigation- deliberately or otherwise- they are all conducted on individual basis. There is no coordination or linkages among these organizations to address Monga. Consequently any actions taken to be fragmented and ineffective and sometimes overlapping’*. Moreover, there is absence of assessment of those programs. Therefore those programs seem to have little impact on the livelihood of the people.

The government has put a focus on monga in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), which was published in 2005. It announced a “holistic approach to social protection against anticipated risks such as monga and seasonal poverty”. The actions so far were very limited. Bhattacharya wrote in his analysis of the Bangladesh economy that a fund was allocated in the budget of the fiscal year 2005-2006 to aid the seasonally disadvantaged poor, but the fund remained unused although monga took place within that period. Even the modality of expenditure has not been finalized yet. In addition, the government allocated Tk. 50 crore in fiscal year 2005-06 and an additional amount of Tk. 55 crore in fiscal year 2006-07 for seasonal employment creation. Unfortunately the allocated fund also remained unused. This fund might be utilized through services of

organizations such as the Grameen Bank, BRAC, RDRS, and PKSf which are working for Monga mitigation.

Sometimes politics has strong impact on taking measures during monga. Monga is part of a heated debate between the government and various opposition parties. This debate can lead to a non-adequate response to the situation, because of political considerations. In 2003 this debate had impact on the activities of some NGOs. Debapriya Bhattacharya et al. mention that "some NGO workers indicated that since the government was not acknowledging the prevalence of monga, they did not dare to initiate any targeted programme." (Zug S, 2006)

Generally, government safety net program is not complementary. If any individual gets support from one program, he may not get support from others. In most of the cases, people may not come out of vulnerability by receiving support from only one program. Government probably took this policy due to resource scarcity in comparison to the demand of large number of people. But if those safety net programs are complementary, it probably makes more impact on the livelihood of the people.

NGO's role to mitigate monga is not satisfactory. NGOs have very little program except micro-finance or micro-credit to mitigate monga. In most of the cases, micro-credit is not provided to the poorest section of the poor. Generally, it is given to the immediate poor people, who can repay the loan. It has been generally found that hardcore poor (characterized by landlessness, low asset base etc) are less benefited from participation in micro-finance program. If micro-finance does not contribute to the formation of assets for the extreme poor households, then it will create more liability for them.

Government's policy agenda addressed Monga issue lately. Government and NGOs undertook various project and programmes on pilot basis. Most of them are sporadic in nature. Policy options should lead to employment generation, the core causes of the problem; otherwise policies will prove to be ad-hoc and socially very costly.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5.0 Interview of Experts and its analysis

In this study, interview method is mainly used as primary source of data/ information collection. Generally, survey method is used in the social research, particularly in which mass people are involved. But it was impossible to manage long time to conduct survey method due to the heavy academic pressure throughout the course. Anthropological method is suitable to eradicate conceptual ambiguity regarding the structure of poverty in the monga region. This method demands in-depth analysis of structural poverty which is not possible in this research work owing to time constrain. Indeed, interview method was found to be the most appropriate method to conduct this study within the limited time frame. Structured interview method was applied.

#### 5.1 Interviews

Some distinguished experts<sup>13</sup> were interviewed to know the causes of persistence of monga despite various government and non-government interventions. The total number of experts is six. The experts include: former advisor of the government, former civil servant, economist, academician, manager of the statutory body and NGO official. The profile of the experts is mentioned in the following table:

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<sup>13</sup> Name of the experts is mentioned in the Annexure-2

**Table 5-1: Expert's profile**

Category	Number
Former policy maker	1
Economist	1
Academician	1
Manager of the statutory body	1
NGO official	2

They were interviewed in the following points:

- Reasons for existence of Monga despite various Government and Non-government interventions.
- Year-wise allocation of Government and Non-government organizations to mitigate Monga.
- Monga analysis: Before - After various interventions (Before- After 2005)
- Suggestions to mitigate Monga

#### **5.1.1 Causes for persistence of Monga despite various Government and Non-government interventions**

One of the former policy maker pointed out that we have to know two things to address monga. First, whether the intensity of monga is decreased due to government and non-government interventions. Second, to what extent, peoples are affected during monga in the last two years because of the unusual food price hike. We should also analyze that how different the anti-monga programs are. To know those things, we can survey four groups of people including beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries, government officials and NGO officials. To identify the effect of price hike in the last two years, we have to collect



price of rice and wage rate of the monga region. Then by deflating wage rate with price of rice, we can perceive the situation of monga.

The economist opined that the root causes are problem in land access, lack of industrialization, river erosion, climate change and seasonal unemployment. Entrepreneurship of the people of monga area is also low. A comprehensive database should be established. In most of the cases, government and non-government measures are temporary without any long term vision. He argued that program of NGOs; particularly microcredit makes the people poorer generally.

The academician expressed his views that there is not at all any government and non government intervention to mitigate monga. The coverage of government support is insignificant. NGOs take on very limited program except microcredit. Microcredit does not reach the poorest section of the poor. The main causes of monga are problem in river management, shrinking of working place, less non-agricultural activities, less non-farm activities and lack of infrastructure. Micro-credit does not reach the poorest section of the poor.

Manager of the statutory body pointed out that the reasons of monga are lack of agricultural diversification, lack of industrialization, homestead oriented local culture and mindset, market failure and lack of social integration.

One of the NGO officials expressed his views that there are two main causes of monga: agricultural impasse and lack of skill. Other reasons are river erosion, lack of storage facility and unavailability of insurance scheme. Another NGO official pointed out that exploitative nature in land ownership and food distribution problem are the main reason of monga.

### **5.1.2 Year-wise allocation of Government and Non-government organizations**

All of the experts opined that they do not have the latest information. All the allocation should be calculated. But they assumed that the allocation is inadequate. One of the experts pointed out that one cannot understand the actual situation by observing allocation. We have to see the expenditure pattern.

### **5.1.3 Changes in the severity of munga after various interventions**

Among 6 experts, the economist, manager of the statutory body and one of the NGO officials pointed out that the severity of munga has been decreased in last years despite inadequate government and NGO's support. The main reason is huge migration. One of them told that the intensity of munga is less in urban area. But it is still acute in rural area and char lands. The economist cautioned that if we withdraw our attention to munga, the situation will be worsened. 2 of them opined that the situation has not changed significantly.

### **5.1.4 Suggestions to mitigate munga**

All the experts expressed their views that temporary measures should be turned in to employment oriented approach and skill development. The specific suggestions are-

- The co-ordination between different programs must be established. Local government institutions particularly Upazila Parishad can play the coordinating role.
- Access to resources including khas land and credit must be ensured.
- Small industry such as Food processing should be established.



- Linkage to the market should be developed.
- Infrastructure development
- Training and skill development
- Plantation
- Long-term employment generation

## **5.2 Analysis of Interview**

### **5.2.1 Analysis of Expert's opinion**

Experts expressed their opinion regarding impact of government and non-government interventions. They expressed their views about the changes of the severity of monga over time. They also suggested the ways to mitigate monga. Expert's opinions on these issues are mentioned in the following table:

Table 5-2: Expert's opinion

Generic causes of monga	Causes for persistence of Monga despite various Government and Non-government interventions	Year-wise allocation of Government and Non-government organizations	Changes in the severity of monga after interventions	Suggestions to mitigate monga
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agricultural impasse</li> <li>• Seasonal unemployment</li> <li>• Lack of skill.</li> <li>• Exploitative nature of land ownership</li> <li>• Less non-farm activities</li> <li>• Lack of infrastructure</li> <li>• Limited industrialization</li> <li>• Natural Disasters</li> <li>• Market failure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The intervention programs are not well co-ordinated.</li> <li>• Lack of assessment of anti-monga program.</li> <li>• These programs are temporary and inadequate.</li> <li>• Sporadic and pilot basis program</li> <li>• Limited coverage of micro-credit program</li> <li>• Lack of database</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The allocation is inadequate.</li> <li>• One cannot understand the actual situation by observing allocation.</li> <li>• Examination of expenditure pattern was suggested.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The severity of monga has been decreased in last years despite inadequate government and NGO's support. The main reason is huge migration.</li> <li>• The intensity of monga is less in urban area. But it is still acute in rural area and char lands.</li> <li>• If we withdraw our attention to monga, the situation will be worsening.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The co-ordination between different programs must be established.</li> <li>• Long-term employment generation</li> <li>• Access to resource including khas land and credit must be ensured.</li> <li>• Small industry such as Food processing should be established.</li> <li>• Linkage to the market should be developed.</li> <li>• Training and skill development</li> <li>• Comprehensive database should be established.</li> </ul>



All the experts unanimously opined that Government and NGO's support are temporary and inadequate. Those measures are not enough to mitigate monga. Moreover, those interventions are not well co-ordinated. Broadly, the approach seems to be: Providing welfare support to the distressed people and not to enable the people to fight their way out of their miserable condition. So, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive action oriented program by generating employment and connecting the northern region with mainstream national activities to end monga. At the same time, unconditional relief program and social safety net program can be continued for the unemployable.

Among 6 experts, 3 pointed out that the sufferings of the people due to monga have been reduced in last years. One of them told that the intensity of monga is taking away in urban area. But rural area and char lands are severely affected. They cautiously mentioned that public and private attention to monga should be enhanced to end it. 2 of them told that the situation has not changed significantly. Actually, no study has been done so far on the long-term change of the severity of monga. In a study, most people said that monga was affecting the community stronger in the past and nobody died because of hunger in the last years (Zug S, 2006). They mainly mentioned two reasons for the improvement of the situation. As seasonal labor migration has increased many families can have an additional income during the monga periods. The improvement of the transport facilities and the communication facilities to send back money to the family in the village is one of the main reasons for the positive change. A benchmark survey on monga affected areas in Northern Bangladesh conducted by MongaMUKTA Bangladesh Prochar Obhijan Secretariat (Monga free Bangladesh Campaign Secretariat), a joint initiative of Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad and Actionaid Bangladesh shows that most of the people sent Tk. 500-3000 after migration.

**Table 5-3: Amount of money sent after migration**

District	Amount (Tk.)				
	Up to 500 (Percent)	501-1500 (Percent)	1501-3000 (Percent)	3001 – 5000 (Percent)	5001 and above (Percent)
Lalmonirhat	0	37.5	56.3	6.3	0
Nilphamari	10.8	32.4	16.2	8.1	32.4
Gaibandha	5.3	22.4	30.3	10.5	31.6
Kurigram	3.1	17.0	35.2	19.5	25.2

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that the severity of monga has been decreased to some extent in the last years. Direct government and NGO's interventions have very little impact on this achievement. Seasonal labor migration, improvement of transport facilities and the communication facilities to send back money to the family are the main reasons for the improvement of the situation.

All the experts suggested that there is an acute need for a paradigm shift from relief oriented approach to a sustainable and comprehensive action oriented approach to mitigate monga. The specific suggestions include in the following:

- The co-ordination between different programs must be established. Local government institutions particularly Upazila Parishad can play the coordinating role.
- Access to resources including khas land and credit must be ensured.
- Small industry such as Food processing should be established.
- Co-operative marketing system



- Linkage to the market should be developed. Forward linkage to agro-based industry should be established.
- Training and skill development should be relevant to the regional aspect.
- Comprehensive database should be established.
- Long-term employment generation
- Building people's awareness

### **5.2.2 Analysis of interview according to the theoretical framework**

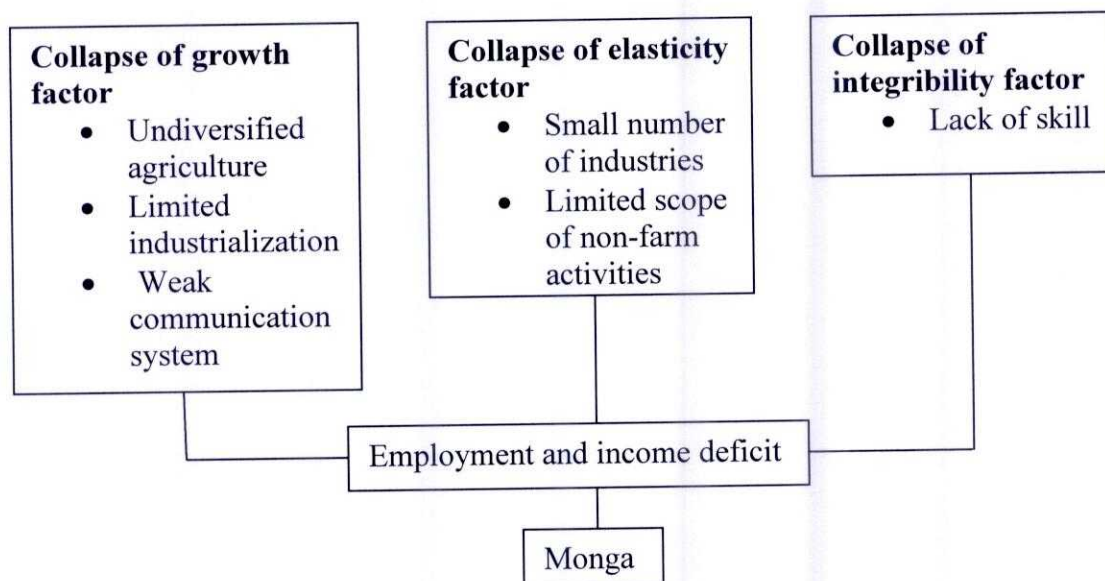
In theoretical framework, we learned that the economic growth process must weaken the forces creating unemployment to mitigate monga. It is influenced by three set of underlying factors: namely, the growth factor, the elasticity factor and the integrability factor. In interview, experts opined that these three factors are not properly functioning in monga area.

In greater rangpur, growth is not scaled up to the satisfactory level. Experts pointed out that undiversified agriculture, limited industrialization, less opportunity of non-farm activities and weak communication system are the main reasons of economic stagnancy. Lack of entrepreneurship and homestead oriented local culture also hinder the growth of the region.

This unsatisfactory growth does not reach the desired employment potential. Although the economy of northern Bangladesh is highly dependent on agriculture; it cannot provide enough employment for the huge surplus labour. A very small number of industries

cannot absorb this huge labour. Scope of non-farm activities is also limited. Experts opined that local dispersion of industry is one of the main ways to mitigate monga. Experts identified that lack of skill is one of the major hindrance to integrate local people to the mainstream economy. They opined that if the program of skill development is successful, poor people can take the advantage of the greater scope of growth and employment expansion.

**Fig 5-1: Factors affecting employment crisis during Monga**



According to expert's opinion, monga persists because of the collapse of all three factors: namely, the growth factor, the elasticity factor and the integrability factor. To mitigate monga, all three factors should be scaled up simultaneously.

Experts pointed out that long-term employment generation is the mainstay to mitigate monga. The question is how a growth strategy can be formulated with necessary employment orientation. In theoretical framework, two different ways of expanding employment opportunities were discussed. These are 'growth-mediated employment expansion' and 'employment expansion through labour market interventions'. Each of these categories can be further divided into two sub-categories. Growth mediated



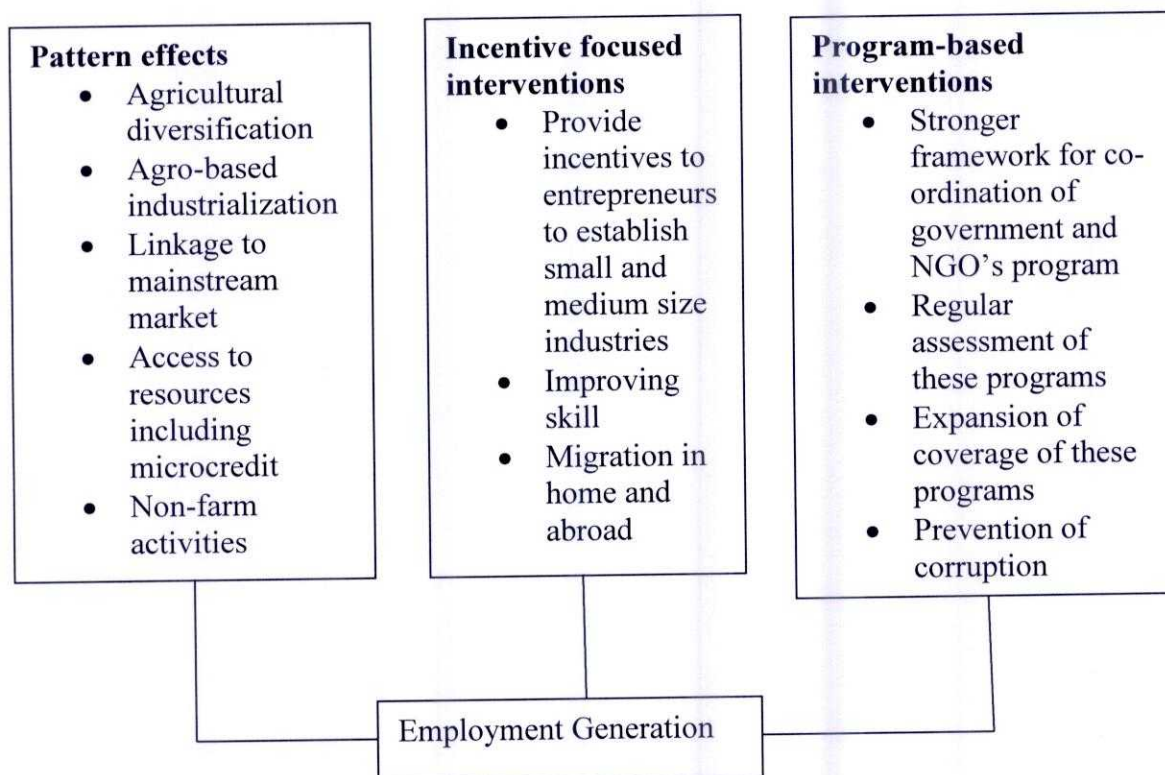
employment expansion can occur in two ways: 'scale effect'<sup>14</sup> and 'pattern effect'<sup>15</sup>. Employment expansion through labour market interventions can also be of two types, depending on the nature of interventions. One set of interventions, which may be called 'incentive-focused interventions' are meant to improve the incentive of employers to hire more labour on the one hand and the incentive of labours. The second set of interventions, which may be called 'program-based interventions' are meant to create new employment opportunities, for specific target groups, through publicly funded programs.

Experts expressed their views that at least three ways (out of four) can be applied for generating employment in monga area. These are pattern effect, incentive focused interventions and program-based interventions. According to experts, scale effect may not be feasible to mitigate monga. In context of 'pattern effect', experts identified agricultural diversification, agro-based industrialization, linkage to mainstream market and access to resources including microcredit as the ways to mitigate monga. From the perspective of 'incentive focused interventions', incentive to entrepreneurs to establish small and medium size industries, imparting technology and skill, migration and to build growth centers in monga area are the suggestions of experts to end monga. From the view point of 'program based interventions', stronger framework for co-ordination of government and NGO's program, regular assessment of these program, expansion of coverage of these program and prevention of corruption are the experts opinion to mitigate monga.

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<sup>14</sup> Scale effect refers to the additional demand for labour that would occur if total output increased in a balanced manner with unchanged technique of production.

<sup>15</sup> Pattern effect refers to the new demand for labour that can be created by changing the composition of output, the technique of production and relative prices and also by eliminating various market failures (e.g. creating self-employment through micro-credit) as part of the growth process.

**Fig 5-2: Expert's opinion regarding employment generation during monga**

Experts identify the causes of monga and loopholes of current anti-monga programs. They also express their view regarding challenges and constraints facing existing employment initiatives. They suggest various measures to mitigate monga, which matches the theoretical framework of this thesis.

### 5.2.3 Exchange Entitlement of Labour Power

Since most of the poor people have as their endowment only labour power with- at best- little bits of land, the most important part of the entitlement relation to look at is entitlement based on labour power. In table 5-4, the indices of rice-exchange for labour from year 2003-2009 are presented with base year 2003 as 100.



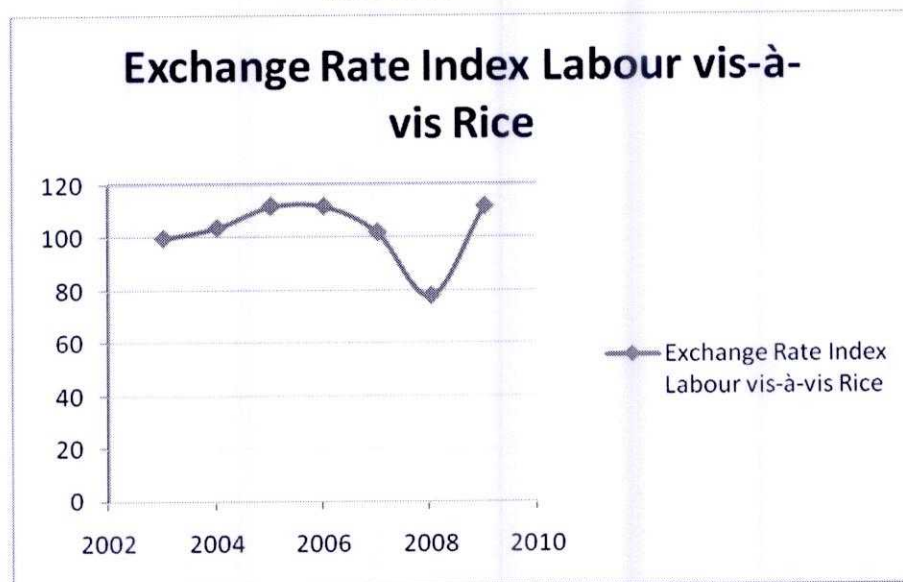
**Table 5-4: Indices of Exchange Rates between agricultural labour and price of Rice in Northern Bangladesh: 2003-2009**

Year	Price of Rice Taka per Kg.	Rice Price Index	Wage Taka per day	Wage Index	Exchange Rate Index Labour vis-à-vis Rice
2003	13.5	100	75	100	100
2004	15.5	115	90	120	104
2005	14.5	107	90	120	112
2006	16	119	100	133	112
2007	19.5	144	110	147	102
2008	27.5	204	120	160	78
2009	22.5	167	140	187	112

Source: UNO office, Polashbari, Gaibandha

This table can also be presented in time series manner in the following figure:

**Fig 5-3: Exchange Rate Index of Labour vis-à-vis Rice in Northern Bangladesh: 2003-2009**



The figure shows that Exchange rate index has been increased gradually from year 2003 to 2007. In this period, the exchange rate index laid around 110. The condition of the labour forces has been improved slightly due to constant increase of the wage, resulting from the reduced supply of labour as a consequence of huge migration. That's why; the severity of monga has been decreased to some extent. The exchange rate index was sharply declined in year 2008 due to the unusual price hike of the rice. In year 2009, the

exchange rate index is again raised to 112. The data of exchange rate index supports that the condition of the poor agricultural labour forces is improving gradually. As a result, the severity of monga is also declining. The dynamics of labour market characterized by migration play the main role in improving monga situation.

### **5.3 Findings**

This study examines the outcome of various government and non-government interventions to mitigate monga. Another objective of the study is to perceive current labour market dynamics of the monga area. In connection of these objectives, the findings are mentioned as follows:

- The severity of monga has been decreased to some extent in the last years. Seasonal labor migration, improvement of transport facilities and the communication facilities to send back money to the family are the main reasons for the improvement of the situation. If we withdraw our attention to monga, the situation will be worsened. So, continuous attention should be paid to address monga.
- The programs undertaken by government and NGOs to mitigate monga have very little impact on the livelihood of affected people. Most of them are based on unconditional relief operation and social safety net program. Some projects are conducted sporadically on pilot basis. Government's policy agenda addressed Monga issue lately. NGOs take on very little program except micro-finance. There is lack of program with long-term vision. The program focusing the long-term employment generation is scarce. The main problem of those programs is that there is no co-ordination among them. Absence of assessment is another big problem. Moreover, the programs are inadequate in comparison to the demand of the people. This study finds that government allocated fund to aid monga-affected people, but the fund remained unused although monga took place. NGOs take on very little program except microfinance. Micro-finance does not effectively reach



the extreme poor. Those above-mentioned set-backs are the reasons behind the existence of monga despite various government and non-government interventions.

- Government safety net program is not complementary. If any individual gets support from one program, he may not get support from others. But the finding is that the government policy needs to be redressed. If those safety net programs are complementary, it probably makes more impact.
- Monga is part of a heated debate between the government and various opposition parties. Political party in power never accepts that monga persists during their tenure. This inattention can lead to a non-adequate response to the situation because of political considerations.
- Funds for agricultural loan remained idle with commercial banks in four northern district but flood affected farmers show little interest for loans. Despite the low interest rate (8 percent), the lengthy and cumbersome procedure of credit administration and alleged harassment for repayment of earlier loan push the people turn to informal money lender.
- Actually, there is no comprehensive database regarding the number of sufferers, coverage of safety net program and forecast of severity for the appropriate management of monga. So, a comprehensive database should be established.
- Government's policy agenda addressed Monga issue lately. Government and NGOs undertook various project and programmes on pilot basis. Most of them are sporadic in nature. So, a qualitatively stronger framework of co-ordination is urgent.

## CHAPTER SIX

### **6. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The northern Bangladesh is ecologically vulnerable and economically weaker. Monga is a regular seasonal phenomenon of the region and it is also an important reason for it. It is created by various factors that are partly man made and partly determined by nature. It is a cyclical set-back for the development of the whole region. To smooth consumption during Monga, households have to adopt different coping mechanism; exposed themselves to greater vulnerability in future. Ecological vulnerability, employment and income deficit, lack of skill, weak linkage to job market or main stream market left them in this vicious circle.

Monga has to be understood in all its aspects to find out the right combination of strategies to address it. The following recommendations are attempt to provide strategies in light of various dimensions, where action is already taken or could be taken in future.

#### **6.1 Recommendations**

In order to maximize the growth and employment potentials of monga region, a comprehensive work plan is suggested below. This work plan will make the growth process more labour demanding (raising the elasticity factor) and remove the impediments the poor people often face in taking advantage of employment opportunities (improving integrability factor). The recommendations are given in the light of two ways



of employment expansion- growth mediated employment expansion and employment expansion through labour market interventions.

### **6.1.1 Short-term Measures**

Following short-term measures have been suggested:

- The local government institutions are still underutilized to carry out anti-monga initiatives. Union Parishad should be chosen as the partner of government as well as donor communities to fight against monga at grass-root level. Upazila Parishad can play the coordinating role.
- Strengthening the Social Safety Net Programmes.
- Agricultural diversification such as expand BR-33 and BR-11 rice cultivation.
- Undertake work-fare programmes employing target population and using very simple technology to maintain rural roads connecting respective Upazilas and Districts.
- Increase income generating projects by the Government, NGOs and other organizations.
- A support to internal migration for the working age people of Monga areas may be provided. In this study, migration is found as the most operational tool to mitigate monga.
- Encourage local NGOs to provide a need-based work plan containing short-term programmes for the chronic and hard-core poor.
- Provision of payment holidays for installments and withdrawal of savings of microcredit during seasonal shock should be introduced.

- Special attention should be given to accelerate ADP implementation maintaining its quality.
- Appropriate measures should be taken to give a 'fair' share of the block allocations of the development and revenue budgets for development programmes.
- The farmers in monga region should get priority in terms of distribution of agriculture subsidy. Procedure of loan distribution should be made simple by financial institutions.
- Promotion of rural non-farm activities.
- Community management of common resources in char land.

### **6.1.2 Medium to Long-term Measures**

There are many medium to long term measures mentioned below:

- Infrastructure development should get priority.
- Undertake interventions like fiscal incentives, industrial policy, foreign employment policy and central funds for the monga regions.
- Supervised credit system should be strengthened through NGOs, PKSf and specialized banks.
- A comprehensive database regarding the number of sufferers, coverage of safety net program and forecast of severity should be established.
- Block allocation for local government institutions should be enhanced.



- Storage and transport facility should be improved.
- New electricity generation plants should be undertaken.
- The gas transmission line projects should be completed.
- By administrative arrangement and making provision for skill development, people should be encouraged to go abroad.
- A new policy to ensure balanced migration from the country should be formulated. The policy would include strategies focusing on workers migration from the monga region and also on reducing the migration cost itself.
- Preference should be given in setting up technical and vocational institutions, setting up promotional offices and providing seed funds for gearing up foreign employment.
- Motivate people to diversify their livelihood.
- Pressure groups should be formed by the participation of people from all hierarchical level.
- Special attention should be given to export manpower on a large scale from Monga areas. To this end, a quota may be introduced for greater Rangpur for overseas employment.
- Increase training facilities at public training centres and institutes for overseas job seekers.
- There should be a provision for financial support through Commercial Banks/NGOs loan for the working age people so that they can go abroad for employment.

- Steps should be taken to establish indigenous, agro-based and export oriented industries and growth center. Local dispersion of industries should be encouraged. Special Economic Zones can be established.
- Law for money lending and share cropping should be implemented. Khas land should be distributed to the landless.
- Research should be conducted on agriculture, markets and local potential; linking up producers with the market and inter-regional exchange of business ideas.

## **6.2 Concluding remarks**

The general objective of the study is to address the causes of Monga and provide a comprehensive approach to solve it through employment orientation. This study finds that undiversified agriculture, limited industrialization, limited scope of non-farm activities, frequent hit of natural disaster and weak linkage between work force of the region and main stream market are the major causes of monga. The monga region is a labour surplus locale and agriculture is the main sector employing around 70 percent of the total active labour force. Most of the agricultural labour remains unemployed during monga. Employment opportunity and wage rate, both dropped by 50 percent due to monga. Scope of non-farm activities is limited due to the frequent hit of natural disaster. Unlike other region of Bangladesh, inflow of remittance is unsatisfactory. In this compelling situation, present initiatives do not reach the desired employment potential to mitigate monga.

In quest of the research question<sup>16</sup>, this study finds that government and NGOs undertake various initiatives to combat Monga. Most of them are based on unconditional relief operation and social safety net program. Some projects are conducted sporadically on pilot basis. Government's policy agenda addressed Monga issue lately. NGOs take on

<sup>16</sup> Research Question is mentioned in Chapter-1, p. 5



very little program except micro-finance. There is lack of program with long-term vision. The main problem of those programs is that there is no co-ordination among them. Absence of assessment of those activities is another big problem. Coverage of these programs is inadequate. Moreover, absence of a comprehensive database hinders appropriate management of monga. NGOs programs particularly, micro-finance does not effectively reach the extreme poor. Those sporadic, temporary and uncoordinated programs have very little impact on the livelihood of affected people. The paradox is that there is no dearth of anti-monga programs, particularly since the issue came into national focus several years ago, but monga still exists. The matter of hope is that the severity of monga has been decreased to some extent in the last years, which is also the most important and interesting finding of this study. Seasonal labor migration, improvement of transport facilities and the communication facilities to send back money to the family are the main reasons for the improvement of the situation. But towards elimination of Monga, there is still a long way to go. As Monga is primarily caused by employment and income deficit, the challenges ahead, are ensuring continuous and concerted interventions, effectively generating optimum employment opportunity through agricultural diversification, economic expansion, imparting technology and skill, linking work force of the region to wider job market inclusive of Readymade Garment sector in the towns and remittance abroad, fabricating appropriate channel to ensure needed quality inputs to their income generation activities, market linkage of their product as well as assistance during seasonal shock.

## **Glossary**

**Ashwin:** Month of Bangla Calendar. It coincides with mid-September to mid-October.

**Aus:** Rice grown in the late dry/early monsoon season.

**Char:** Island in the river formed of alluvial sediments.

**District:** Administrative unit; Bangladesh consists of 64 districts.

**Greater district:** The administrative system in Bangladesh was reformed in the 1980s. Districts were subdivided. Former Rangpur district for example was subdivided into Gaibandha, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari and Rangpur, which are now called districts. To make a differentiation between old and new districts possible, 'greater' is prefixed to old districts.

**Kartik:** Month of Bangla Calendar. It coincides with mid- October to mid-November.

**Khas land:** State land under administration of ministry of land arising either from new formation or seizures in excess of 33.3 acres ceiling under land reform legislation.

**Manufacturing:** Manufacturing is defined as the mechanical or chemical transformation of organic or inorganic substances into new products, whether the work is performed by power driven machines or by hand, whether it is done in a factory or premise based location and whether the products are sold whole sale or retail.

**Share-cropping:** People cultivate the land of the landlord and have to return a certain proportion of the harvest.

**Share-rearing:** People rear livestock of other owners and the profit is shared.



**Taka:** Currency of Bangladesh. 1 US Dollar = 69.5 taka (Approx.) (05.11.09)

**Transplantation:** Process of removing paddy from a small densely seeded field and to replant the plants in an equal distance to a big field.

**Union:** Lowest tier of the local government in Bangladesh.

**Upazila:** Immediate upper tier of union parishad.

## Annexure

## Annex- 1: Manufacturing Establishments in greater Rangpur (1999-2000)

District	Type of industry	No. of Establishments	Persons engaged
Gaibandha	Bidis Manufacturing	8	982
	Manufacturing of Earthenware	27	293
	<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>1275</b>
Kurigram	Rice Milling	43	645
	Bidis Manufacturing	6	792
	Cotton, Textile except Handloom	2	928
	Bricks, Tiles and non clay products	22	1157
	<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>3522</b>
Lalmonirhat	Bidis Manufacturing	6	327
	<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>327</b>
Nilphamari	Tobacco Stemming, Redrying	2	35
	Tobacco Manufacturing N.E.C	7	224
	<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>259</b>
Rangpur	Rice Milling	92	1507
	Manufacturing of Bakery Products	16	240
	Distilling & Rectifying of Spirit	2	336
	Cigarettes Manufacturing	2	390
	Bidis Manufacturing	68	9368
	Tobacco Stemming, Redrying	33	897
	Saw Milling and Planning Mills	40	480
	Structural Products of Bamboo	2	76
	Manufacturing of Soap and all detergents	10	240
	Manufacturing of Polythen Products	15	255
	Bricks, Tiles and non clay products	84	6384
	Agricultural Machinery and Equipment	1	517
	Electrical Appliances	2	78
	<b>Total</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>20768</b>
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>490</b>	<b>26151</b>

Source: Zug S (2006), Monga, Seasonal food insecurity in Bangladesh- Understanding the problem and strategies to combat it



**Annex-2: Name and profile of the Experts**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Profile</b>
Dr. Akbar Ali Khan	Former policy maker	Former advisor, Care-taker government Former Chairman, Regulatory Reform Commission Former Cabinet and Finance Secretary Former Chairman, Social Development Foundation
Dr. Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad	Economist	President, Bangladesh Economic Association and Chairman, Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad
Professor Anu Muhammad	Academician	Chairman, Department of Economics, Jahangirnagar University
Mr. Abdul Momin	Manager of the statutory body	General Manager, Finance and Administration, Social Development Foundation
Mr. AFM Shahidur Rahman	NGO official	Head, Livelihood Security & Risk Reduction Sector, ActionAid
Professor Haradhan Ganguly	NGO official	Project coordinator, Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad

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