

**Impact of climate change: A study of people living at *Char***

**A thesis presented by**

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Climate change is now the most unpredictable threat to our planet. The climate of the earth has changed over the last century. It is the most pressing issue at the moment. Bangladesh is one of those countries that are most vulnerable to climate change (CLP, 2011). Climate change affecting many of the communities and their livelihood through rapid changes in temperature and rainfall patterns. It is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world. Due to geographic location especially in monsoon climate, the country is highly vulnerable to natural disasters. Due to this problem, many people lost their land, house, assets. They become homeless. As a result, they are migrating to char. So in my research, my main objective is to find out the changes in the livelihood after migration to char.

There are some specific objectives; I would like to work on to support my main objective. Those are:

1. To find out their socio economic background.
2. To find out their work opportunity.
3. To find out if they are getting access to basic rights and benefits (i.e. education and healthcare)

The temporary islands or *chars* of the Jamuna River in Northern Bangladesh is habitat of three million poor people and isolated these rural communities face multiple livelihood challenges (EGIS, 2000). Poverty is not limited to a lack of income for char people; these households also face severely restricted access to Government institutions, markets, basic infrastructure, healthcare, education and financial services. Sirajgonj is one of the Northern districts of Bangladesh that is considered to be a highly flood prone district. Most vulnerable areas of this district are mainly char. There are many char situated in Sirajgonj. Those are Filbari, Khasbarashimul, Aknadhighi, Boroghorijan, Muradpur, Fulhara etc. But I have chosen to carry out my research at Chokboyra. This area was selected as research area due because this is one of most vulnerable among all those char situated in Sirajgonj.

Methods: I've focused on some techniques to fulfill my research goal. Those are:

### **Survey:**

While preparing this research, I have selected an area for field visit to get the primary sources of data as well as the realistic scenario of the findings and talked to the native people and get necessary information. After the survey I used the data obtained from the field in different parts of the main report to analyze it.

I have also focused on the secondary source of data including published books, reports of different organizations, documents collected from different websites of different organizations and institutions. On the basis some literature reviews and theories provided on the existing issues.

### **Case studies:**

Case studies are conducted to evaluate individualized core participants outcomes. Sometimes researchers are puzzled by particular cases - unusual successes, unusual failures or dropouts. I collected detailed case studies to portray the situation from different perspectives. Three case studies were conducted to generate an in-depth understanding of the topic.

### **Focus group discussion:**

The research was designed with extensive methodology where focus group discussion (FGD) is used. A FGD were conducted to generate an in-depth understanding of char livelihood. About 14 people responded to many questions that were asked through FGD tools. This was done in order to get collective opinion regarding any particular issue. A lot of information was found on coping mechanism and issues related to it directly or indirectly. Following data collection, FGDs were translated and analyzed manually.

### **Key person interview (KPI):**

I have taken an interview of Roufa Khanum, Researcher in Centre for Climate Change and Environmental Research faculty. She is hugely experienced on char issues. She has done several projects on char. She helped me lot with her expert opinion.

I have also taken an interview of union chairmen of my research place. His name is Golam Kibria. He is working as a chairman for last few years. He had huge experience on char livelihood.

### **Analysis of data:**

The analysis of data has been carried out following the field work and interviews. Firstly, I've recorded the interviews then translated those interviews into English.

### **Limitations of the studies:**

Time and resource are the main limitations of this research. Due to the time limitations I could not go through the enough materials relevant to this research and I had to narrow down my area of studies. And due to the resource and time limitations, I could not manage to go to more than one *char* to get the practical feature. I also found people is not that much well aware of some of the facts regarding these issues. During the research, many issues came that has scope for further studies.

### **Issues of Ethics:**

In every research, there should be some probations of enquiring others that is ethical issues of a research. The ethical issues for conducting such kind of research work had been strictly followed. At the very beginning of my interview process, I informed my respondents that this research is being conducted strictly for research purposes, no harm or benefits could be done to the respondents through the research and no monetary benefits would be provided during the field work. I also ensured respondents of maintaining confidentiality. Respondents had freedom to withdraw from the interview at any time. There was no such a situation of enforcements to

answer the questions as s/he had the right not to answer any questions if unwilling and participation had been voluntary. The set time for the meeting had been maintained thoroughly. No personal questions and any questions deemed irrelevant for the research had not been asked. No such question was asked which could go against any race, religion, caste and moral issues.

### **Literature review:**

Climate change also called global warming refers to the rise in average surface temperatures on Earth. An overwhelming scientific consensus maintains that climate change is due primarily to the human use of fossil fuels, which releases carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the air. The gases trap heat within the atmosphere, which can have a range of effects on ecosystems, including rising sea levels, severe weather events and droughts that render landscapes more susceptible to wildfires.(Ahmed,A & Hussain,S. 2012).

The primary cause of climate change is the burning of fossil fuels, such as oil and coal, which emits greenhouse gases into the atmosphere—primarily carbon dioxide. Other human activities, such as agriculture and deforestation also contribute to the proliferation of greenhouse gases that cause climate change. While some quantities of these gases are a naturally occurring and critical part of Earth's temperature control system, the atmospheric concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> did not rise above 300 parts per million between the advent of human civilization roughly 10,000 years ago and 1900. Today it is at about 400 ppm, a level not reached in more than 400,000 years. (CCC, 2009).

Even small increases in Earth's temperature caused by climate change can have severe effects. The earth's average temperature has gone up 1.4° F over the past century and is expected to rise as much as 11.5° F over the next. That might not seem like a lot but the average temperature during the last Ice Age was about 4° F lower than it is today. Rising sea levels due to the melting

of the polar ice caps contribute to greater storm damage; warming ocean temperatures are associated with stronger and more frequent storms; additional rainfall, particularly during severe weather events, leads to flooding and other damage; an increase in the incidence and severity of wildfires threatens habitats, homes, and lives; and heat waves contribute to human deaths and other consequences.(CCC,2012).

Changes in nature have serious implications for people and our economic system. The insurance industry estimates the potential economic damage caused by the impacts of climate change to be hundreds of billions of dollars each year

#### **Climate change impacts on river:**

Rivers and lakes supply drinking water for people and animals, as well as being vital for agriculture and industry. Oceans and seas provide food for billions of people. Climate change will have major and unpredictable effects on the world's water systems, including an increase in floods and droughts. Extremes in droughts and flooding will become more common, causing displacement and conflicts on. Less fresh water means less agriculture, food and income.(Alam,k.2010).

#### **Climate change impact on forests:**

Forests are most important element. They purify our air, improve water quality, keep soils intact, provide us with food, wood products and medicines and are home to many of the world's most endangered wildlife. An estimated 1.6 billion people worldwide rely on forests for their livelihoods, including 60 million indigenous people who depend on forests for their subsistence. Forests also help protect the planet from climate change by absorbing massive amounts of carbon dioxide.

Unfortunately, forests are being destroyed or damaged at an alarming rate by logging and burning to clear land for agriculture or livestock. These activities release huge amounts of carbon

dioxide and other harmful greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Scientists estimate that up to 20 percent of global carbon emissions come from deforestation – greater than the combined emissions of every car, truck and plane on the planet. So instead of forests helping us to solve the climate crisis, deforestation is making the situation worse. (Alam,k. 2010).

### **Climate change impacts on food security:**

Climate change will have a significant impact on food systems. Climate change poses a significant risk of increased crop failure, loss of livestock and will impact on local food security. In some areas drier and warmer conditions are predicted, elsewhere wetter and cooler conditions are expected which will negatively affect agricultural practices. It will affect human health and livelihoods, as well as people's purchasing power, food markets and food security at household levels (EGIS, 2000).

Although most may not have a name for it, everyone in Bangladesh has noticed that the climate is changing. As summers grow hotter, and winters milder, once familiar weather patterns grow increasingly extreme and erratic. Many of you notice that there are now only four seasons instead of the usual six. More intense and frequent cyclones, prolonged floods, increased river and coastal erosion, droughts and salinity of farmland are all environmental problems made worse by climate change. The world's climate is changing and will continue to change. Risks associated with these changes are real but highly uncertain.

Societal vulnerability to the risks associated with climate change may exacerbate ongoing social and economic challenges. The investigations were explored the nature of risk and vulnerability in the context of climate change and review the evidence on present-day adaptation in developing countries. The delta of three rivers, the Brahmaputra, Ganges and Meghna has created the land of Bangladesh. The combined flow of these three rivers makes this the third greatest river system in the world ( CDSP, 2014).

Bangladesh is recognized worldwide as one of the country's most vulnerable to the impacts of global warming and climate change. This is due to its unique geographic location, dominance of



floodplains and low elevation from the sea, high population density, high levels of poverty and overwhelming dependence on nature. The country has a history of extreme climatic events claiming millions of lives and destroying past development gains. Variability in rainfall pattern, combined with increased snow melt from the Himalayas and temperature extremes are resulting in crop damage and failure and that is preventing farmers and those dependent from meaningful earning opportunities. In a changing climate the pattern of impacts are eroding our assets, investment and future. This stands for families, communities and the state. Climate change affected country and people know this better than Bangladesh, where millions of people are already suffering. Sudden, severe and catastrophic floods have intensified and taking place more frequently owing to increased rainfall in the monsoon. Over the last ten years, Bangladesh has been ravaged by floods of catastrophic proportion in 1998, 2004 and 2007. Droughts often affect even coastal districts. Bad weather keeps the coastal waters risky for fishing expeditions. Damages and losses due to climatic extremes like floods, cyclones, tornados, and droughts are phenomenal to the victims as well as the state. These are early signs of global warming effects. Sea level rise in the coming decades will create over 25 million climate refugees. (CCC, 2012).

The country has a history of extreme climatic events claiming millions of lives and destroying past development gains. The people and social system have knowledge and experience of coping with their effects - to some degree and extent. Variability in rainfall pattern, combined with increased snow melt from the Himalayas and temperature extremes are resulting in crop damage and failure, preventing farmers and those dependent from meaningful earning opportunities. In a changing climate the pattern of impacts are eroding our assets, investment and future. This stands for families, communities and the state. Climate change threatens settlements and the number of people displaced from their land due to riverbank erosion, permanent inundation. Sea level rise is increasing rapidly every year. Resource and effort of government and people are quickly drained addressing the impact of one event when another hazard strikes. Impacts of climate change have the potential to challenge our development efforts, human security and a future (C3ER, 2015).

Char a tract of land surrounded by the waters of an ocean, sea, lake or stream. It usually means any accretion in a river course. It includes all types of bars including both lateral (point-bars) and medial (braid-bars). In the dynamics of erosion and accretion in the rivers of Bangladesh, the sand bars emerging as islands within the river channel or as attached land to the riverbanks, often create new opportunities to establish settlements and pursue agricultural activities on them. A distinction should be made between island chars, which are surrounded by water year-round and attached chars, which are connected to the mainland under normal flow. Once vegetated such lands are commonly called *chars* in Bangladesh. Chars in Bangladesh can be considered a 'by-product' of the hydro-morphological dynamics of its rivers. The Irrigation Support Project for Asia and the Near East (ISPAN) study indicates that the chars that are not eroded in the first four years of their emergence could be used for either cultivation or settlement by the end of these four years ( Alam,k. 2010).

Chars in Bangladesh have been divided into four sub-areas: the Jamuna, the Padma, the Upper Meghna and the Lower Meghna rivers. There are other areas of chars in Bangladesh, along the Brahmaputra and the Tista rivers. But compared to the chars in the major rivers, these constitute much less land area. It is estimated that in 2008 the total area covered by chars in Bangladesh was 1,722 sq km. The Jamuna river chars have different sizes. The Jamuna contained a total of 56 large chars, each longer than 3.5 km. There were an additional number of 226 small chars, varying in length between 0.35 and 3.5 km. This includes sandy areas as well as vegetated chars. (RDA, 2013).

Each year a large percentage of the chars get flooded. The flooding, if it comes early it can damage the crops in the fields. People in chars build their homesteads on the highest available land and if they stay there for any length of time, then it become more difficult for them. The island chars are found to be flooded more extensively than the attached chars.

The socio-economic conditions of people living in chars vary widely between rivers and sometimes even between the upper, middle and lower reaches of the same river. The life of the char people is closely related to variations in the dynamics of river and char formation as well as the associated erosion and flood hazards (RDA, 2013).

On the global context, Bangladesh is known as one of the most vulnerable countries to the impacts of global warming and climate change and prone to natural disasters. The reason behind this is its uncommon geographic location, dominance of floodplains and low elevation from the sea level, higher population density in comparison to other countries, enormous poverty and extravagant dependence on nature, unplanned usage of natural its resources and services. Bangladesh has a history of excessive natural catastrophes taking millions of lives and destroying previous achievements in national development. To some degree, the people and have knowledge and experience o f coping with their effects. The social system, to certain extent, can also cope with these effects. Diverse pattern of rainfall, combined with increased snow melt from the Himalayas and extreme temperature are resulting in crop damage and failure, preventing farmers and those dependent from meaningful earning opportunities. In a changing climate the pattern of impacts are eroding our assets, investment and future. Resource and effort of government and people are quickly drained addressing the impact of one event when another hazard strikes. Damages and losses due to climatic extremes like floods, cyclones, tornados, and droughts are phenomenal to the victims as well as the state. These are early signs of climate change. Sea level rise in the coming decades will create over 25 million climate refugees. This stands for families, communities and the state. Climate change threatens settlements and the number of people displaced from their land due to riverbank erosion, permanent inundation and sea level rise is increasing rapidly every year. A lady named Sufia Khatun from a char land of Shirajgonj describes such experience of her:

*"It has been 6 months my house has been washed away in the bank erosion. I have four children. I have my mother-in-law at home. I had to send away my son to Dhaka when he was ten, because of poverty. He works at a garment factory in Dhaka. Our previous house was on 1.5 acres of land. We live here on someone else's land."*

Resource and effort of government and people are quickly drained addressing the impact of one event when another hazard strikes. Impacts of climate change have the potential to challenge development efforts, human security and their future livelihood.

The coastal and char geomorphology of Bangladesh are characterized by funnel shaped, vast network of river, strong tidal and wind action and enormous river discharge laden with bed and suspended sediments. Therefore, the geo-climatic environment of the these areas are strongly influenced by the Bay of Bengal situated in the southern part of Bangladesh and dominated by following three main factor which are considered as the major causes of natural catastrophes, such as - a) Wind direction b) Precipitation and c) River and terrestrial runoff. Aside with these, wide and open coast , strong current and wind dynamics of erosion and siltation, natural slopping of the continent etc. are considered as the silent features behind the causing of natural disasters. The poverty monitoring survey done by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics in 2005 identified different natural disasters like tornados, river bank erosion, salinity intrusion, water stagnation, heavy rainfall etc as the main causes to migrating to char . So it is imperative to study the impact of climate change on in char areas of Bangladesh.

It was found that the levels of formal education were low in the Sirajgonj chars. They adopted their own indigenous knowledge livelihood strategies that were well adapted to the strongly seasonal and uncertain environment. Lack of schools, colleges and other educational institutions and shortage of available study materials are dragging these regions backward in terms of education. Having inadequate educational qualification, the people of chars are unable to either educate themselves or provide proper education for their children. This factor forces them to pursue jobs in garments sector or other professional sectors where their sufferings are not curbed; rather doubled. A young married woman named Josna shortly describes her condition in this regard:

*"I try to read in between work and prayers. I have not studied till far. We're poor; I have led a difficult life since childhood. My parents were very poor. They could not manage to give me food. I ate by working at others' houses. When could I study?"*

Social structures were critical. Infrastructure was comparatively poor in the chars, for example fewer schools, health care facilities and travel to such places was time consuming and expensive. Health worker visits appeared to be less frequent in the char. Flood shelters had been built through NGO programs especially in the Jamuna. The chars appeared to have fewer boats

relative to population. In addition to the major physical risk associated with the river, char dwellers in particular were marginalized from the benefits of mainland Bangladeshi society through their poor communication networks. The livelihoods analysis based on findings in Sirajganj district painted a bleak picture of the life of poor households in the chars and suggests that the combination of physical and social characteristics make the chars one of the poorest parts of Bangladesh, with the people being amongst the most vulnerable.

The infrastructure in the unprotected mainland also has a high risk of eroding in the near future but is likely to have been built when the river was further away. Each year a large percentage of the chars get flooded. People in many chars have to leave their homesteads due to floods, which entails host of problems with regard to transportation, shelter, security and rehabilitation. The flooding is also a problem for those involved in livestock rearing since severe difficulties emerge with respect to shelter, transportation and marketing of the livestock.

Service provisions are generally poor in the chars, compared to the main land. It is understood that the provision of public services in chars is difficult and expensive. But then again, having this difficulties in reality, it is also true that the government has the capability of taking attempts for the betterment of the people of this land in all the sectors including education, health, nutrition, service, settlement, security. The government also has the responsibility to ensure empowerment of women in the char lands because, what I have observed in the char areas is in most of the cases women like Josna or Sufia have to take the burden of their families in their troublesome situation. There are few specific policies or instruments for these areas. Land and laws related to the submergence and reappearance of land in theory help poor people by allocating land to them or by protecting their interest in land when it re-emerges. In practice the government plays a limited part in this process and one way or other those with power and influence can control and influence the process to the benefit of themselves and their followers.

Health facilities within the island char areas are generally scarce, compared with quite a good coverage in the unprotected mainland. This is logical to the extent that thana and union health centre are buildings that cannot be moved and so the investment is risky in island chars that frequently erode and accrete. As Josna discusses the health issue from her life experience:

*"My husband is suffering from tuberculosis. The hospital that diagnosed his disease gave us a card exempting from any charges for the treatment. He has been prescribed a six-month rest. I am a lone woman. I have three children. At last, I decided to work in different houses. With that I run my household. I need to feed him eggs, milk and medicines regularly..... I am in good enough health but my husband's illness is my greatest difficulty. I do not have a problem working. If my children have problems eating, I ask my aunt to give them something to eat."*

She adds her tension regarding the health and nutrition issue:

*All is well with a person if their health is fine. If any part of my body fails to function, will I stay well? I can live without any savings, or by borrowing from others to eat enough to stay in good health because that will maintain my ability to work. If I do not eat enough, will my body not become weak? How I work then?*

Char lands can provide high value crops that can be harvested before the first flood peaks occur and social forestry has also been successful in some of the chars. Most of the households in Sirajganj char areas surveyed were dependent on agricultural activities and family income largely constituted by farm income. Local Jute is mainly grown in lowland areas, adjacent to water bodies and major crops. In the medium and highland areas potato, garlic, sugarcane, millet, wheat, sweet potato, ground nut, chili, kheshari, and other crops are grown. During dry periods very little land is irrigated by small irrigation devices. Due to poor communication facilities and a lack of institutional support the expansion of irrigation facilities is very limited. In the chars there are few trees compared with mainland areas. New settlers usually plant banana trees when they make their homesteads and if the land appears stable then plant there saplings. Unprotected main land also has homestead trees like any other rural areas.

Case study 1: My name is Musammat Rekha Khatun. The river bank has eroded a couple of years ago. I have been living here for a year. I need to pay Tk.500 per year in interest to live here. I have 3 sons, who are nine, five and three years old respectively. I cannot read or write. I can only write my name. My husband is illiterate as well. My paternal home is at Khaspur. I was

married off at 10/12 years of age. I have not inherited any land or property from my husband's. Whatever was there was washed away in the bank erosion. We earn our livelihood by working on other's lands. There is only one room at our house which was built through much difficulty undertaking debts.

Now, we face problems managing adequate food. We eat one meal in a day, and forgo the other. We eat when we earn enough, otherwise we do not. Illnesses are persistent as well. I am ill, so is my husband. My eldest son is suffering from jaundice. We cannot afford to go to Sirajgonj for treatment.

We do not face any troubles in performing religious rituals. My son studies at the Madrasa.

We cast votes. Political people do not disturb us. Though we do not receive any assistance from the local chairman, member or any neighbors, at least they do not inflict any troubles. We have a sound affinity with them. I offer prayers in my leisure.

My husband considers my opinion when taking decisions concerning the family. I do not have any cows or goats. Other women in the village who own domesticated animals need to take care of them. Before, I used to do chores like washing clothes, picking rice grains etc. at others houses but now that I am ill, I cannot anymore.



photo: Rekha Khatun sharing her story

#### Case study 2:

Josna- Alas, earlier, I used to live at Miteil. From there, I moved to the garments sector where the rent was very high. Moreover, my husband is ill; he is unable to do much work, or pull rickshaws for a living. So, I solely earned Tk.5000, out of which, Tk. 3500 had to be paid out in rent, and Tk. 170 for groceries every day. At that point I thought of taking a loan. How else was I supposed to pay the rent and buy food? At last I moved to my in-laws'. However, that house was on the verge of demolition by bank erosion. Then I went to a maternal uncle's house who live in char and requested my aunt, "Please provide me some space to stay." I was then expectant. I could not think of what to do at the time. I could not eat anything. I did not even have a place to live. I added, "My husband is very ill as well. So please give me a place to stay.



We shall leave as soon as our child learns to walk.” Then she replied, “You can stay for a year or two.” Now that our son is two years old and can walk, we intend to settle in Dhaka once again.

My husband is suffering from tuberculosis. The hospital that diagnosed his disease gave us a card exempting from any charges for the treatment. He has been prescribed a six-month rest. I am a lone woman. I have three children. At last, I decided to work in different houses. With that I run my household. I need to feed him eggs, milk and medicines regularly. I barely have any assets here; neither do I have much skill. I live by borrowing things from others. Everyone is aware of my difficulties. So whomever I go to helps with something or the other.

I worked in a garments’ factory for a short time. I only learned to operate the plain machine. I conceived at that time. I was unable to eat anything. I only felt drowsy. The line-men would rebuke me. Then I decided that I would return to my village, and go back to Dhaka after my child was born. I had not been able to buy land to have somewhere to live. How long would my uncle keep me?

I am in good enough health but my husband’s illness is my greatest difficulty. I do not have a problem working. If my children have problems eating, I ask my aunt to give them something to eat. She understands that I am unable to manage it for them. So she helps. My neighbors help by providing commodities. Since I do not have anything, they advised me to seek money from door to door, so as to buy materials for the roof to build some shed as monsoon was approaching. To build my house I went to many doors seeking things like a couple of bamboos. Some people gave me but that was not enough to build a house. My children did not go to school.

I try to read in between work and prayers. I have not studied till far. We’re poor; I have led a difficult life since childhood. My parents were very poor. They could not manage to give me food. I ate by working at others’ houses. When could I study?

I work by my own will. I do not have any problem. I vote. I do not have problem in that either. If anyone forces me to vote for a specific party, I say that I am an innocent person. I will vote whomever I wish.

I am a poor person. Will my friends even pay attention to me? They are rich people and I am poor. I do not have any friends. I make ends meet by asking help door-to-door. People who have some assets their relatives try to help them in amounts more than necessary. However, I have nothing; so who would give me anything? They will tell me to stay away. But many of my neighbours help me if I ask to borrow anything.

When I am worried or upset about anything, I call and talk to the people around. Otherwise I feel I will suffocate to death.

All is well with a person if their health is fine. If any part of my body fails to function, will I stay well? I can live without any savings, or by borrowing from others to eat enough to stay in good health because that will maintain my ability to work. If I do not eat enough, will my body not become weak? How I work then?

Yes, I do plan that I need to manage food through work; I need to secure a land, a house of my own. I cannot fall asleep on nights when these thoughts hover in my mind. I am staying at my uncle's. Now if my uncle asks me to leave, then with no other option, I will have to return to the garments' factory. My aunt has advised me to go work in the garment sector again. The neighbors around show importance to what I say.

Where will I plant trees when I do not even have my own land? I used to cultivate vegetables at my previous residence, and sold those. I cultivated something or the other in whatever piece of land I could find.

How will I own a TV when I cannot even manage meals! I do not go to others' to watch TV because I do not have my own. I do have some shame.

My work opportunities include digging soil at different houses. I have work for a couple of days, and then nothing for the next three. I earn Tk.500 in the two days. Would that Tk. 500 suffice for a week? Then there is the 40-day work at the government offices. The chairman-members say it would take Tk.3000 to take up work. "Provide Tk.3000 and take up the 40-day work." I

will have nothing left if I give them that money. So neither could I give them the money nor did I get the job. That is why I work at different houses.

I have come here because of the bank erosion. Otherwise I would have stayed at my in-laws'. I learned a lot after going to Dhaka. Now wherever you take me to, be it the Prime Minister's, I can speak. I was a fool before. I could not even speak in front of ten people. I used to tremble with fear, but now I can even sing on a stage if you ask me to.



photo: Inside of Josna's house

### Case study 3:

Sufia Khatun: It has been 6 months my house has been washed away in the bank erosion. I have four children. I have my mother-in-law at home. I had to send away my son to Dhaka when he was ten, because of poverty. He works at a garment factory in Dhaka. Our previous house was on 1.5 acres of land. We live here on someone else's land.

My house is built of tin. I did not have a house, and this had to be built by asking around for help. We all live in one room. My husband has broken shoulders. He is unable to perform heavy work. A large part of my body is missing. In an accident once, a major portion around my stomach had been cut off. I regained my consciousness after nine days. Now I cannot work owing to my illness. My youngest son goes to school; he studies in Class three, while my eldest son works at the garments' in Dhaka.

Inadequacy of food is persistent. We live as tenants. We manage to eat one meal, and forgo the other. Neither I nor my husband can work. We manage to live on whatever our son earns. We rely on God to feed us. It is not feasible to ask for help from others each time we fail to manage on our own. We must provide for ourselves in the end.

Our neighbours often help us. Some offer us 100 grams of rice, others 500 grams and some others give Tk.10.

We are free to practice our religion. No problems are caused by that. We faced no problem in casting votes as well. We are able to cast votes.

Both my husband and I are illiterate. He can at least write his name but I cannot even do that.

My paternal home is near but my in-laws' house has collapsed into the river.

My son earns Tk.5000 every month. He visits the village twice or thrice a year.

Now it is all Allah's desire. If He wills, this (working at a garments factory) will provide for us sufficiently, and if He wills that this will worsen our situation, then be it. Everything happens as

per His will. Everything, good or bad, is in His hands. I do wish that Allah keeps everybody well. May my children get to live a proper life. I wish their well-being.

Family decisions are taken by my husband; I voice my opinion too.

Here, women work in others' houses to manage their daily meals. If we steal, it will result in loss of honour; however, there is no loss in honour by working.

One can take up any kind of work to make a living. One may make a living by anything except dishonest means. Those who earn through honest means can claim to survive each day by taking only one meal. The one who fears Allah, fears everything that is dishonest.



Photo: Sufia khatun inside her house with her two children

## **Conclusion and Recommendation:**

Finally, char is the most vulnerable place in our country. Most of the people here live under the poverty line. So this work has shown that conditions of char dwellers after, they migrating to char. The illiteracy, early marriage, poverty, financial dependency, no education, lack knowledge, lack of information and awareness that all represent the condition of char dwellers. The study of this research situated one of the poorest places in our country. Bangladesh is now developing but a single touch of development you will not find here. Government is not doing anything for them. In my research, I did not find NGO's are doing any remarkable work.

In my study, I've found some way I would like to recommend and I'm hopeful those recommendation might improve their life.

1. Shelters required for people, animals and agricultural products.
2. Create Local awareness about climate change.
3. Medical service facilities for all the people lived in Char.
4. Develop Knowledge about agriculture.
5. Needed better communication system.
6. Government and NGO need to establish more school.
7. Arrange some awareness program about family planning.
8. Government should design some development program in char.
9. They need potential buyers or special market to sell their agricultural product.

## **Questioners:**

1. Family genealogy- their family history?

2. Education-if they have academic education or their children have opportunity to go to school?
3. Occupation- what they do for living?
4. Being able to have good health, adequate nutrition and adequate shelter?
5. Political expression – Are they free to express their political views?
6. Exercise religion – Are they free to practice their religion, as they want?
7. Do they eat fresh meat, chicken or fish at least once a week?
8. Do they aware about climate change?
9. What they do for recreational activities?
10. What is their idea about a good life?
11. What types of facilities they given by government?
12. What are the roles of NGO?
13. Healthcare facilities?
14. Women empowerment?

While doing this research, I've taken some picture that might help to get the idea of char and some respondents.









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