



# SITUATION ANALYSIS OF CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS IN BANGLADESH

*(An Analysis Based on “Socio-Economic Baseline Survey of  
Chittagong Hill Tracts” Data)*

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## Executive Summary

### Introduction

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) is situated in the southeastern part of Bangladesh, covered with lush green hills, innumerable *jharnas* (scattered fountains) and hundreds of *choras* (mountain streamlets); and is surrounded by Myanmar and Mizoram (India) in the east, Tripura (India) in the north, districts of Chittagong and Cox's Bazar in the west and south respectively. It has a total land area of about 13,294 square km (about 10% of land area in Bangladesh) and a population of about 1.3 million (BBS 2001). Administratively, CHT comprises of three hill districts: Banadarban, Khagrachari and Rangamati. There are twelve ethnicities (11 indigenous and Bangalees) living in CHT. The eleven ethnic multi-lingual minorities are: Bawm, Chak, Chakma, Khyang, Khumi, Lushai, Marma, Mro, Pangkhua, Tangchangya, and Tripura.

The current study is based on the secondary analysis of “Socio-economic Baseline Survey of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT)”<sup>1</sup> sponsored by UNDP-CHTDF. The current study initiated by the Save the Children (UK) has been conceived for attaining a wider understanding of various aspects of life of the people living in Chittagong Hill Tracts.

### Methodological Discussions

‘The Socio-economic Baseline Survey of CHT’ was conducted using a representative sample of all 12 ethnicities living in CHT. The study has generated the data/information from 3238 households and covered well dispersed 199 *paras* in 29 unions, 13 Upazillas and all the three CHT districts. The study was conducted during September 2007 to May 2008. It is to note although the sample as a whole and by ethnicities was representative of all CHT, district wise representativeness was not adhered. However, for the accompanying situation analysis, an attempt has been made to disaggregate the data by districts and within the districts by broader population categories, such as indigenous and Bangalees. Therefore, the findings are completely indicative and to be understood with appropriate cautions. The data/information generated in the baseline survey of CHT is focused on the households and there is no children specific data in that study.

### Key Findings

About 62% households in the region irrespective of ethnicities are living below absolute poverty line (below 2,122 kcal), while 36% are hardcore poor (below 1,805 K.cal). Poverty is slightly less pronounced among the Banglaees. A 59% of Bangalee households are absolutely poor and 31% are hardcore poor. No major variation in terms of poverty incidences have been revealed across the districts.

A close to two-thirds of the current Bangalee population in CHT is transmigrated people. Around 31% of rural CHT households had to change their usual place of residences at least once in their life-time and the average number of shifting is 1.7 times. 38% of all indigenous

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<sup>1</sup> Barkat Abul et al. (2008). Socio-Economic Baseline Survey of Chittagong Hill Tracts, conducted for UNDP-CHTDF, (Unpublished Draft Report) by Human Development Research Centre (HDRC), Dhaka.

households had to shift for almost 2 times. During 1997-2007, an average Bangalee household had to move from their first permanent residence in CHT about 1.4 times. The highest occurrences of out-migration took place in Khagrachari (46%) followed by Rangamati (25%) and Bandarban (21%).

Land ownership of a household in context of CHT is to be understood along with three major types of ownership: (i) individual registered ownership, (ii) traditional ownership under (recorded and/or not recorded with headman) under usufruct rights, and (iii) usufruct rights to ownership of common property (different from that in plain land). Irrespective of ethnicity, 95% households own some land (including common property).

An average rural household in CHT owns about 200 decimals of land (all types of land excluding common property). The highest amount of land i.e., about 244 decimals of land owned by an average household in Bandarban followed by Rangamati (196 decimal). The lowest amount of land (164 decimals) owned by people living in Khagrachari district. An indigenous household owns about 254 decimals which is almost double of a Bangalee household (136 decimals) in rural CHT. Indigenous households possess significantly higher amount of land compared to the Bangalees in all three districts of CHT. In Bandarban Bangalee households possess about 67 decimals of agricultural (plough) land while an indigenous household possesses 48 decimals. In Rangamati, difference in agricultural (plough) land ownership between Bangalee and indigenous household is prominent where an average indigenous household possesses almost two times higher amount of land (39 decimal) compared to that of Bangalee (20 decimals). Besides this scenario, in Khagrachari district Bangalee and indigenous households possess almost equal amount of agricultural (plough) land (around 45 decimals). Higher amount of ownership of jum land has been found in indigenous community compared to Bangalee in all three districts in the CHT. The highest amount of jum land owned by indigenous households has been found as 102 decimals in Bandarban district followed by Rangamati (66 decimals) and Khagrachari (46.5 decimals). Fringe land has been found prominently in Rangamati district where about 35 decimals of such land owned by a household and indigenous household possesses more land compared to Bangalee household by an amount of 11 decimals.

In rural CHT, almost all households possess own house. On average, a Bangalee household owns assets worth Taka 61,730, which is 30% higher than that among average indigenous HH. The majority (63%) of the houses of indigenous communities are *kancha*, among the Bangalees 96% houses are *kancha*. Straw/jute stick/leaves/*chaan* has been used as the main roof construction material more frequently than that among the Bangalees. Bamboo is the most frequently used wall construction material for both among the indigenous and Bangalee. More than 80% of the households in CHT do not have electricity irrespective of the three districts in this region.

On average, 2.75 person in a household (HH size is 5.2), that is 52% of the total household members is either employed or employable. One-fifth of the employable people on CHT irrespective of indigenous peoples and Bangalees are unemployed. This pattern of high unemployment is similar among the three districts in CHT. In rural CHT, about 9% households are female-headed. An average year of schooling is around 5 years in CHT, irrespective of indigenous peoples and Bangalees. This is also similar among the three districts in CHT. Only 7.8 % CHT people completed primary education and 2.4% completed secondary education. One-third households are involved in field cropping only, about one-fifth are involved in *jum* only, and a small portion (9%) does both field and *jum* agriculture.

Plough and *jum* cultivation has been found in more than 50% of all indigenous households, while most Bangalee households depend on plough agriculture.

The average annual net income of a rural household in the region irrespective of ethnicities is about Tk. 65,852, while the same in rural Bangladesh (at the current price of January 2008) is about 1.28 times higher. Field cropping as source of income has been reported by substantially higher proportion of Bangalee households hill districts of Bandarban and Rangamati compared to their indigenous counterparts. However, in Khagrachari the scenario is reverse (53% vs. 40%). *Jum* cultivation is the second most pronounced source of income across the districts. It is to note that in Bandarban the share of households reporting *jum* as source of income is made by higher proportion of households compared to field cropping. The household annual expenditure in rural CHT is lower than that of rural Bangladesh (Tk. 62,000 vs. 73,000). The share of food expenditure is extremely high across the communities comprising about 90% of total household expenditure. The annual household expenditure on health and education for an average household is extremely low with Tk.605 and Tk.398 respectively.

In terms of per capita savings, an average household member has Tk.702, while an average indigenous people household member possesses Tk.467 and Bangalee household member; Tk.890. NGOs have been appearing as a place of depositing savings for both Bangalees (46%) and indigenous peoples (30%). About 54% of all CHT households reported some access to credit. The Bangalees have higher access to credit as compared to the indigenous communities.

The physical quantity of daily food intake per person in CHT is about 781 gm. The average daily per capita food intake of Bangalee household is higher (800 gm), which is 769 gm among the indigenous communities. In terms of energy intake of food, people living in rural CHT use to have 1,798 K.cal per day which is less than the level of the hardcore poor (below 1805 Kcal). The average per capita daily energy intake status of the Bangalees (1,842 K.cal) is slightly better than the indigenous communities (1,762 K.cal) but still under the level of the absolute poor (below 2,122 K.cal).

About one-fourth of the respondents have reported that there is no school in the *para* or in close proximity to the community. About 82% children of 5-16 years are enrolled in primary or secondary school. The enrollment among the Bangalees is marginally higher than that among the indigenous peoples. The dropout scenario among the students is deplorable with 65% households reporting about discontinuation of children's education before completion of primary and 19% after primary.

Peoples' knowledge status about health problems and about the facilities and providers to go for care if these health problems occur is simply deplorable. Their awareness is very low on how to prepare ORS, ANC checkup, PNC checkup, and delivery by medically trained provider, place to go for child vaccination, ARI treatment of child, and place to go for treatment. Malaria has been pronounced more compared to other diseases in the CHT with a little variation among the districts. The highest number of incidence of malaria has been found to be 3.5 in Bandarban followed by Rangamati (2.6) and Khagrachari (2.1). The contraceptive prevalence rate is 54%, and the unmet need for family planning is 12%. Therefore, as against 73% demand for family planning nationally, the rate is 66% in CHT. Insignificant number of deliveries takes place in health facilities.

Majority of the households irrespective of districts in the CHT use unsafe drinking water. This trend is same for indigenous peoples and Bangalees. But the source of drinking water varies among the districts in CHT due to geographical variations.

In CHT, irrespective of variations among the three districts, all the household members still do not use any type of latrine. Unhygienic pit latrine is possessed by 51% of the households irrespective of indigenous groups and Bangalees in Rangamati, which is 44% in Khagrachari.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The findings of the study depict the deplorable conditions of the people living in the Chittagong Hill Tracts Region irrespective of their geographic locations (districts) as well as ethnic identity (indigenous or Bangalees). It is to note that household level information by children category is not generated and therefore deprivation status of children is not covered.

On the backdrop of the findings presented above, it is suggested to undertake separate studies on children related issues by communities and locations. Moreover, the path finding nature of the current study, it is recommended to undertake in depth household level survey on bamboo flowering and rodent attack and its impact on (i) food consumption and, (ii) agricultural cultivation, income, and employment; and (iii) livelihood status of rural CHT.