

DETAIL STUDY ON THE PEOPLE (PARTICULARLY POOR, LANDLESS AND VULNERABLE) HAVING LIVELIHOOD BASED ON AGRICULTURE AND MARKETING IN THE EASTERN COASTAL REGION



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Executive Summary

Background: Livelihood Security and SHOUHARDO

Nature and process of wellbeing of poor and vulnerable people is a debatable issue but without ambiguity the major development challenge for Bangladesh is to feed her nation with adequate foodstuff and to ensure access to resources for consistent and persistent livelihood security in a broader sense for a sustainable basis. Despite decades of 'development', multidimensional poverty in Bangladesh has continued to persist. With a considerable regional variation the level of poverty is typically higher for the landless, especially those who depend on agricultural wage labor as their principle occupation. In the context of food security, the Household Livelihood Security (HLS) has become CARE's basic framework for program analysis, design, monitoring and evaluation. Livelihood can be seen in concept of continuum where people specially the poor and the extreme poor possess various form of livelihood assets namely, human, natural, financial, social and physical capital. But these poor and extreme poor people are fragile and live in vulnerability which includes various types of shocks, and seasonality. Recently CARE has undertaken a new project *Strengthening Household Ability to Respond to Development Opportunities (SHOUHARDO)*: a five-year program covering periods from October 2004 to September 2009. The overall program goal is "to sustainably reduce chronic and transitory food insecurity of 400,000 vulnerable households in Bangladesh, by 2009." The program will adopt community driven approach in its attempt to reduce poverty through people's empowerment and improved governance of the service providers. The **key objective** of the study is to further understand and explore the agriculture based livelihood options, problems and opportunities of the poor people of the eastern coastal region.

Methodology

In line with the objectives of the study, both quantitative and qualitative methods have been followed. The sample households were selected using appropriate sampling procedure, so that it represents the natural pattern of distribution of households in the project areas. It is important to note at this point that, the two categories of poor – namely the 'poor' and 'extreme poor' households are those which have been identified by the CARE and PNGOs as such through PRA exercises conducted with the community people. Six different types of data collection instruments/tools have been developed and used for generating multidimensional data/information from various categories of respondents/participants. A total of 478 household level interviews, 3 focus groups discussions (FGDs), 3 group discussions (GDs), and 3 seasonality diagrams were conducted in three coastal districts – Chittagong, Noakhali, and Cox's Bazar.

Key Findings

Among survey households, 76% are **poor** and remaining 24% are **extreme-poor**. In SHOUHARDO program participants, the sex ratio is 98, and among the extreme poor, it is only 74 (nationally 104). Among 480 households, 19% households are **headed by female**. And this proportion is higher among the extreme poor group.

The poor and extreme poor households in the eastern coastal region in terms of high **dependency ratio** (105), highly pronounced female headed household, and high **unemployment** during rainy and other off seasons. The disadvantaged situation of these poor and extreme poor households aggravates further due to low educational profile and already prevailing low economic status. The problem of **food insecurity** aggravates during the flooding seasons. The overall economically active population is lower than the national

average, as the numbers of children and older people above 60 years are also proportionately high in SHOUHARDO project area.

Although most of the employable population is employed, the problem intensifies with **seasonal variation of employment-demand** (low demand during rainy and flooding seasons), for which they are to move to other areas time to time.

Average **years of education** is 1.8 years, with less in extreme poor. 'No education' is more in extreme poor. Overall there are 76% households, where there is at least 1 child – either boy or girl – who have discontinued his/her education before completion of compulsory primary education. **Dropout** is more prevalent among the poor (80%) than the extreme poor (65%). Largely, education of majorities (60%) remains confined at the level of primary education. Dropout is higher among the girls. Quality of education in terms of child-friendliness may be one of the reasons. The **affordability** in terms of sending their children to school is low both for poor and extreme poor.

Poverty status analysis using different measurement approaches reveals that primarily agriculture livelihood dependent SHOUHARDO project participants in southern coastal region are invariably vulnerable poor households who along others suffer from livelihood insecurity, and systematic and transitory food insecurity coupled with non-food insecurity. This has made their lives extremely susceptible to poverty. Moreover, the food insecurity is threatened by seasonal hardships caused by lower FTE (full-time equivalent) days and larger family size of 5.8 members.

The average per day per capita income is Tk.11.46. Although their yearly **income** has been estimated to Tk. 25,000 for poor and Tk. 15,000 for extreme poor, the average daily income per employed member is equivalent to 1.4 Kgs. of rice (Tk. 24). Non-agricultural sources contribute to about 65% of their income.

On average a participant household can afford to spend monthly Tk. 619 per person (poor: Tk. 629 and non-poor Tk. 600) for meeting all the basic needs. They spend most of their **expenditure** (86%) for meeting the food needs.

Overall, 70% has availed **credit** of which 13% from Grameen Bank and 40% from other NGOs. However, 13% borrows money from local *Mohajons* and other sources. About 29% of them spent the credit in meeting up expenditure-income deficit, while about 14% has to borrow for repaying the earlier loan. Underlying causes of poverty are more related with policy-advocacy issues, while the immediate and intermediate causes of poverty are related with institutional issues. The participants at time of survey on average reportedly have about Tk.1189 as **savings**. Most of it is lying with savings instruments.

On average, the amount of **land owned** by each household is 21.9 decimal, with 22.6 decimals owned by poor households and 16 decimals owned by extreme poor households. On average, the value of all types of land owned by poor households worth Tk. 52,272, and that owned by extreme poor households worth Tk. 33,676. Their household assets and dwelling status are also very poor in comparison to national. They have 9 decimals of agricultural land on average, of which about 6 decimals are under own cultivation, and the rest amount is either shared out or mortgaged out. About 86% of yearly operated land is under paddy production and per acre yearly yield of rice is also much lower than the national average. Overall, **absolute landlessness** is higher than national in both poor and extreme poor households.

The **daily food** of average participant household member in a relatively better week comprises 430 gm. of rice (same as estimated national requirement), and drops to 333 gm. during hardship week. The food consumption pattern in better weeks reflects low protein, fat and vitamin intake. The situation turns worse during hardship weeks. The situation of the extreme poor in terms of food intake is more vulnerable compared to poor even during the better weeks and become worse during the days of hardship, *Asadh - Ashvin* (rains and early autumn). During the days of hardship the intake further reduces to 1409 kilo-calories, which are 34 percentage-points below absolute poverty level and 22 percentage-points below hard core poverty level. They have to reduce energy intake for surviving the hardship days in all items, e.g., rice, egg, fish and pulse. To improve food security, the project will face the five major challenges—increase number of income earning activities, increase resource flow for supporting income earning activities, increase number of FTE employed days, increase income level against FTE employed days, and undertake activities towards small family norms.

Overall knowledge co-efficient on various health issues is 45% and among poor households knowledge co-efficient is 47% which is higher than that of extreme poor. More than 50% participants are not aware of various health issues.

Overall knowledge co-efficient on health issues achieved by participants of SHOUHARDO is almost 46%. It implies that more than 50% people among SHOUHARDO participants are not aware of basic health issues. Low **knowledge** co-efficient issues of health and hygiene (below 33 %) are— ‘three danger signs of pregnancy’, ‘where to go for EOC’, ‘why PNC check up is needed’, ‘whether knows relationship between iodized salt and goitre’, ‘what are three STDs’, ‘where to go for STD treatment’, ‘what is HIV/AIDS’, ‘how HIV is transmitted’, ‘what is arsenicosis’, ‘why night blindness in children happens’, and ‘where to go for treatment of TB and leprosy’. The poor are more knowledgeable than extreme poor on all these issues. In all the SHOUHARDO program areas, water-borne diseases, especially diarrhea, dysentery and arsenicosis are endemic problems. In some of the areas malaria still persists. Still one-fourth of the households are not able to use arsenic-free **water for drinking**. It is higher in case of extreme poor. **Hand washing practice** before food preparation, and after disposal of baby’s excreta in the sanitary latrine or in a pit are the two hygienic practices that are low in the SHOUHARDO study areas and need attention.

Overall knowledge score on basic **women’s rights** is low (0.45), and it is very low among the extreme poor (0.36) than that among the poor (0.47). Women’s roles at household level are largely confined to activities related to household maintenance, food processing, serving and preservation, caring/raising children, look after domestic poultry birds and to some extent homestead gardening and remain unrecognized and unaccounted though very much essential. Overall score of women’s autonomy in decision making within the household is as low as 0.17. But the score is quite high (0.61) when women can take household decision jointly with husband or other. On the other hand, overall one-fifth of the household decisions are made without any involvement of female household member. In terms of women’s mobility, except in certain areas, only a little over one-third of the women can move independently on their own. And equal proportion of women is not allowed to move neither alone nor with any other male household member. Apparently mobility is little higher among poor than extreme poor. Most disappointing picture revealed in case of women participation to community institutions which is almost absent. However, a considerable women’s access is reported to the group credit systems particularly NGOs credit group though a considerable proportion of women still out of that benefit. In most of the decision making affairs, females in extreme poor group have more freedom compared to poor group.

Labor wage in agriculture sector is very low in respect to other category of employment. In Chittagong region agriculture labor gets taka 80 per day while a mason or a carpenter gets taka 120 per day. During the harvesting months, usual work hour is 12 hours/day.

Out of the total 1742 acres of **khas land and waterbodies** in the five unions only 55 acres (3.16%) have been distributed among 72 landless poor household, and the rest – a huge of about 97% (1687 acres) are misappropriated by the land-water grabbers. Although very low in numbers, each landless household, on average, received 0.764 acres of khas land and/or waterbodies. The potentials of distributive justice is huge and significant in poverty eradication, because with fair distribution of 1687 acres misappropriated by the land–water grabbers, at least 2210 landless households can be benefited, if awarded 0.764 acres each.

The average overall **knowledge score about agricultural technology** is 4.7%. It is low for - balanced fertilizer, integrated pest management, ideal seed bed, production of quality seed, seed preservation, organic pesticide, inter cropping, pond preparation technique, livestock farming, and poultry farming. The farmers' knowledge about different service providers at GO and NGO level is also very poor.

In Bangladesh vulnerabilities and **sufferings from disaster** is beyond description for poor household. Cyclone, flood, draught, and river erosion up to dowry has been identified by them as disaster. In the recent past (during last one year), flood (30%) was reported as the most dominant natural disaster followed by illness (20%) and cyclone (18%) among poor and extreme poor household. Dowry or wedding cost (10.5%) was reported as a crisis by extreme poor household. Radio is the prime source of early warning message (38%) for both poor and extreme poor. Both pre and post disaster humanitarian assistance is inadequate for them. But for sustainable reduction of vulnerability in terms of livelihood security which means sustainable reduction of chronic and transitory food insecurity requiring greater access to resources is still absent.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are forwarded on the basis of in-depth analysis of the status of livelihood security of the participants. SHOUHARDO may consider reviewing and appraising these recommendations in the project:

1. Poor and marginalized women and children should be given highest priority as proportion of female-headed households (95% are extreme poor) is predominant
2. To sustainably improve low-income marginalized people's livelihood security, linkages should be established towards:
 - Khas land and waterbodies distribution mechanism along with raising awareness on land right issues
 - GoB nation building departments
3. To facilitate household income rise, high utility avenues may include
 - Practical skill development training
 - Small loans for IGA (handicrafts, cottage industry, petty trading, etc.)
 - Training on seasonal disasters and environmental crisis coping
4. To increase productivity and income from agricultural sources – the following are suggested:
 - Institute awareness development activities towards “minimum land for maximum food production” principle
 - Impart training on technologies for agriculture diversification
 - Organize workshops for poor and extreme poor farmers on specific issues at local level
 - Impart training to farmers on unfamiliar-to-them new practices of various crop production technologies along with demonstration farming

5. Facilitate formation and functioning of a self reliant network of an apex organization of existing CBOs: VDCs and SDCs with wide mandate for socio-economic development and comprehensive plan of actions
6. New marketing links between agro-farmers and wholesale markets or big retailers need to be developed through group marketing in where VDC can work as a platform.
7. Establishing direct marketing system by launching “Farmer’s Market” which can be the important sales outlet for agricultural producers nationwide.
8. The VDC in its present form should be strengthened further so as to establish an alternative power structure of the poor
9. To improve impact on health and hygiene incorporate provisioning of clean, safe and arsenic free drinking water, hygienic latrine and access to WES information to participant households
10. Give priority to install “arsenic removal filter” for drinking water in HHs of arsenic prone areas.
11. Strengthen publicity of early warning message
12. Organize adequate BCC to raise community awareness regarding preparedness, and disaster coping strategies
13. Organize special training and orientation for male and female to address gender issues and create women friendly environment
14. Key gender issues to be addressed on priority are equal access to resources and services (khas land, water; credit, training, other support services); gender differences in roles and activities; agricultural extension; commercialization of agriculture; empowerment and access to decision-making

Our Learning
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SHOUHARDO is a promising, but complex learning and action program 2. Achieving the goal of SHOUHARDO “<i>Sustainably reduce chronic and transitory food security of 400,000 vulnerable households in 18 districts of Bangladesh by 2009</i>” is possible 3. Transforming this possibility in to reality will require institutionalization of 3Cs: CONCERN, COMMITMENT and COMPETENCE of all stakeholders involved in the program.

Future Research Areas

SHOUHARDO – is a promising program deals primarily with food security of vulnerable households. SHOUHARDO is a real experimental learning and development program for poverty reduction. In this process of experiment and learning it is suggested to conduct, among others, the following research activities.

1. Identify saline tolerant varieties of crops for coastal region.
2. Creating a win-win situation for both land owners and tenants in sharecropping.
3. Explore conflict resolution strategy for the conflict arisen from poor peoples’ right based movement.
4. Study political economy of *khas* land and *khas* waterbodies.
5. Cost-benefit study of SHOUHARDO.

SHOUHARDO-Fact Sheet

Indicators	Findings
Average HH Size	5.8
Sex ratio (Male Female)	98:100
Children (less than 18 yrs)	53%
Young people (15-30yrs)	27%
Female headed HH	19%
Dependency ratio	105.3
Average years of schooling	1.8
Prevalence of child labor	21.3%
Proportion of poor: PRA estimates	76%
Proportion of extreme Poor: PRA estimates	24%
Below poverty line income (less than PPP \$ 1)	97.7%
Average daily per capita income (Tk.)	11.46
Hard core poor (DCI method)	51.5%
Absolute poor (DCI method)	73.5%
Below lower poverty line (CBN method)	74%
Agricultural as a source of income	44%
Agricultural income (in Tk.) as share of HH income	32.6
Average number of income source	3.5
Average number of agriculture related income source	1.7
Income earner per household	2.6
Household daily income (Tk.)	63
Household daily income in rice equivalent (kg.)	3.6
HH daily income per earner (Tk.)	24.2
HH daily income per earner in rice equivalent (kg.)	1.4
Average monthly expenditure per person (Tk.)	618
Of which, Food	86%
Of which, Non-Food	14%
HH average savings (Tk.)	1189
Received loan from any sources	70%
Received loan from <i>Mohajan</i>	13%
Absolute landlessness	18%
Ownership of land less than 50 decimal	71%
Average land holding (decimal)	21.9
Dwelling status: Own homestead	47%
Women's knowledge coefficient on health issue	0.19
Overall knowledge coefficient on women's rights	0.45
<i>Khas</i> land and waterbodies lying with land-water grabbers	96.8 %
Average amount of distress sale in last crisis (Tk.)	7,197 (-38%)