

Identity Based Discrimination and Economic Disparity between the Mainstream and Indigenous Communities: *An Exploratory Research in the Northern Districts of Bangladesh*



Abul Barkat
Asmar Osman
Rabindranath Soren
G M Suhrawardy



Human Development Research Centre

www.hdrc-bd.com

Conducted for



With support from



Dhaka: March 2015

Identity Based Discrimination and Economic Disparity between the Mainstream and Indigenous Communities: *An Exploratory Research in the Northern Districts of Bangladesh*

Prepared by

Abul Barkat, PhD^{1>}
Asmar Osman, MSS^{2>}
Rabintranath Soren^{2>}
G M Suhrawardy, MSS^{2>}

 **Human Development Research Centre**

Road # 8, House #5, Mohammadia Housing Society, Mohammadpur, Dhaka –1207
Phone:(8802) 8116972, 58157621, Fax: 880-2-58157620
E-mail: info@hdrc-bd.com; Website: www.hdrc-bd.com

Prepared for



With support from



Dhaka: March 2015

^{>1}Study Team Leader, and Chief Advisor (Hon.), Human Development Research Centre (HDRC)

^{>2}Research Consultant, Human Development Research Centre (HDRC)

^{>2}Research Consultant, Human Development Research Centre (HDRC)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Bangladesh is a multiethnic, multilingual, multi-religious country. Although majority of the country's population belong to one ethnic and linguistic group (i.e, Bangalee who are termed as Mainstream community in this study), a large number of Indigenous communities live here. Indigenous people are discriminated socially, economically, politically and so forth; which ultimately lead them into unequal (disparity) socio-economic status and resulting poverty trap. However, there is a distinct dearth of research study, showing comparative analysis of identity-based discrimination and economic disparity-related indicators between the two groups- Mainstream (Bangalee) and Indigenous communities. Against this backdrop, the present study has been conceived.

The accompanying study is an outcome of about two years of extensive hard work, involving the devoted time of our field team, commitment of the respondents- the Indigenous and various relevant organizations- and the representatives of the common people in Bangladesh, sleepless nights of in-house staff members of Human Development Research Center (HDRC).

I am thankful to Oxfam for understanding the crucial need of such a study and entrusting HDRC to carry out the research work. The enthusiasm of Mr. Snehal V. Soneji (Country Director, Oxfam) towards the study is highly appreciated. I am also thankful to MB Akhter (Program Manager, Oxfam) for his stimulating inputs towards the study. We are particularly thankful to Saikat Biswas (Project Coordinator, Oxfam) for his unstinted support at all stages of this research work. I am also grateful for all out support of PNGOS of Oxfam during the survey phase of the study.

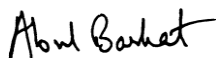
The distinguished speakers and contributory attendants of the dissemination workshop deserve special thanks for their thought-provoking remarks and queries, which exert inputs for our proposed policy suggestions.

I gratefully acknowledge the commitment of Faisal Mohammad Ahamed (Research Associate, HDRC) in designing sampling strategy. I appreciate the work of Ajoy Kumar Saha (IT Manager, HDRC) for processing the data. I am thankful to Kabiruzzaman Lappu (Project Officer, HDRC) for coordinating the training of enumerators and field data collection survey. I am thankful to Abu Taleb (Director-Finance, HDRC) for his active support over related financial and administrative functions. I also appreciate the hard work of Sabed Ali (Administrative Officer, HDRC), Arif Miah (Accounts Officer, HDRC), and Mozammel Huq (Computer Operator, HDRC) for their efforts towards the study.

Data collection was complex. However, the field team was so trained and committed that they finally did overcome all odds, and completed their tasks successfully. In this regard, I am grateful to them for the commendable work done with utmost sincerity.

I shall remain ever grateful to the respondents of the survey, without whose profound support, the implementation of the study would have been impossible.

Finally, I believe, the commitment and efforts put in this study would be significant to eradicate the disparity in accessing rural land market by poor people and would help to make a vibrant rural land market.



Prof. AbulBarkat, *PhD*
Study Team Leader
&
Chief Advisor (Hon.), HDRC

Dhaka: March 2015

Acronyms and Abbreviations

BDT	Bangladeshi Taka
CBN	Cost of Basic Need
CHT	Chittagong Hill Tracts
CS	Case Study
DC	District Commissioner
DCI	Direct Calorie Intake
DCI	Data Collection Instrument
ED	Economic Disparity
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
HDRC	Human Development Research Centre
HHs	Households
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ILO	International Labour Organization
IP	Indigenous Peoples
KII	Key Informant's Interview
LGI	Local Government Institutions
MFI	Micro Finance Institution
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PRA	Participatory Rapid Appraisal
PNGO	Partner NGO
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SSNP	Social Safety Net Program
UDHR	Universal Declaration on Human Rights
UP	Union Parishad

CONTENTS

Sl. No.	Title	Page #
	Acknowledgement	
	Acronyms and Abbreviations	
	Executive Summary	
	CHAPTER 1: RATIONALE, OBJECTIVES, SCOPES AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	1
1.1	Background of the Study	1
1.2	Objectives of the Research	2
1.3	Scopes of the Study	2
1.4	Limitations of the Study	2
	CHAPTER 2: IDENTITY BASED DISCRIMINATION AND ECONOMIC DISPARITY: A RAPID SURVEY ON PERTINENT CONCEPTS, MEASUREMENTS, VARIABLES AND INDICATORS	3
	CHAPTER 3: METHODS AND APPROACHES OF THE STUDY	13
3.1	Study Area	13
3.2	Data Collection Methods	15
3.3	Study Design	15
3.3.1	Estimated Representative Sample Size of households for quantitative survey	15
3.3.2	Design for Qualitative Survey	17
3.4	Data Analysis	19
	CHAPTER 4: IDENTITY BASED DISCRIMINATION AND ECONOMIC DISPARITY BETWEEN MAINSTREAM AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY	20
4.1	Discrimination and Disparity in Education Attainment.....	20
4.2	Discrimination in Access to Health Services and Health Disparity	21
4.3	Discrimination and Disparity in Accessing Employment and in Attaining Wage	22
4.4	Disparity in Access to Credit	23
4.5	Discrimination in Accessing Institutions and SSNPs	24
4.6	Income Disparity	25
	CHAPTER 5: COMPARATIVE POVERTY SITUATION BETWEEN MAINSTREAM AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY	27
5.1	DCI and CBN Poverty	27
5.2	Land Poverty	28
5.3	Natural Resource Poverty	30
5.4	Electrification Poverty	30
5.5	Poverty as Deprivation.....	31
5.6	Poverty of Fear	34
	CHAPTER 6: KEY FINDINGS AND POLICY SUGGESTIONS	36
	Selected Bibliographies	40

List of Figures

Figure 2.1:	Interdependent (causal) Complex Cycle of Discrimination and Disparity: An UNDERSTANDING	6
Figure 3.1:	Overall research approach and methodology of the study.....	13
Figure 3.2:	Spectrum of Data Collection Methods	15
Figure 3.3:	Triangulation of Data and Information	19
Figure 4.1:	Completion of education level (%) (above 9 years of age)	20

Sl. No.	Title	Page #
Figure 4.2:	Illiteracy Rate (% , 5 yrs. and above).....	21
Figure 4.3:	Varied Disability Status across the Communities	22
Figure 4.4:	Disparity in Employment (%)	22
Figure 4.5:	Household members having lower wage than stipulated one in case of job-holding in town (%)	23
Figure 4.6:	Sources of Credit in last one year (%) (Multiple responses)	24
Figure 4.7:	Average Yearly net household income (in BDT).....	25
Figure 4.8:	Yearly Net Household Income across the communities (in BDT)	26
Figure 5.1:	Direct Calorie Intake (DCI) Poverty (%)	27
Figure 5.2:	Cost of Basic Need (CBN) Poverty (%)	28
Figure 5.A:	Major causes and mechanisms of land dispossession and associated alienation of indigenous peoples	29
Figure 5.3:	Landless Households (<50 decimal) among Mainstream and Indigenous Communities .	29
Figure 5.4:	Electrification status of the Households under Survey (%).....	30
Figure 5.5:	Household electrification status across the communities (%)	31
Figure 5.6:	Deprivation Index among the comparable communities	33
Figure 5.7:	Deprivation Index (0=Least Deprived; 100=Most Deprived)	33
Figure 5.8:	Potential fear factors reported by the households (%).....	34
Figure 5.9:	Most reported potential fear factors across the communities (% reported by households).....	35

List of Tables

Table 3.1:	Selection of survey area.....	13
Table 3.2:	Sample Distribution of households for Quantitative Survey	17
Table 3.3:	Distribution of FGDs, Oral History and Case Studies.....	17
Table 3.4:	Distribution of KIIs	18
Table 3.5:	Sample Size by Data Collection Instruments (DCIs)	18
Table 3.6:	Tabulation Plan.....	19
Table 4.1:	Percentage of households under different Income Slab	25
Table 5.1:	Deprivation Score (0=Least Deprived; 100=Most Deprived)	32

List of Matrices

Matrix 2.1:	Variables and Indicators in terms of definition of Discrimination (both Identity-based and General)	7
Matrix 2.2:	Variables and Indicators in terms of definition of Economic Disparity/Inequality	10

Annexure

Annex 1:	Survey-based Data Tables	43-135
Annex 2:	Data Collection Instruments (DCIs)	136-167
Annex 3:	Oral History	168-176
Annex 4:	FGD	177-214
Annex 5:	KII	215-218
Annex 6:	Case Study.....	219-240
Annex 7:	Identification of Indigenous & Mainstream Communities	241-243
Annex 8:	The Study Team	244-245

Executive Summary

There is hardly any study comparing identity-based discrimination and concomitant disparity, poverty between the Mainstream and Indigenous communities in the local epistemology. Considering this research dearth, this study is aimed to explore identity-based discrimination and economic disparity through comparison between the Mainstream and Indigenous Communities at three northern districts of Bangladesh. The study finds Indigenous households to be poorer (in all the indicators used), more discriminated and prey of higher disparity compared to the Mainstream Bangalee community. Higher poverty incidences among the Indigenous communities seem to be emanated from the expanded discrimination and disparity faced by them.

Indigenous households are discriminated in case of forming human capital (in accessing education and health services) of their members, in availing employment opportunities, accessing credit, being facilitated with SSNPs and institutional services. All these discrimination let the households face disparity in the attainment of education, health, financial, physical capital and ultimately ensue income disparity among the households of Mainstream and Indigenous communities. Mainstream household members are found to be more literate (83.7% literate in Mainstream against 73.3% in Indigenous) than those of Indigenous household members. Household members without any sort of formal or informal education are higher among Indigenous peoples - 26.7% against 16.3% of household members of Mainstream community. Due to lack of human, physical and financial capital, Indigenous peoples had less working opportunities. In case of full-time employment, Indigenous peoples were lagged behind by 43.4% while in case of average number of working days in a year, Indigenous peoples were lagged behind by 32.9%. Mainstream households, on an average, earned 18.97% more income than the Indigenous households. More than 14 percentage point households of the Indigenous community remained in the lowest income slab, than those of Mainstream community.

There are more poor people in Indigenous community than in Mainstream community, in terms of both DCI and CBN poverty. Though number of absolute poor, in case of DCI poverty, is nearly close in both the communities; hardcore poor are considerably higher in Indigenous community. Landlessness remains the principal cause of poverty of Indigenous peoples. Landlessness among Indigenous households is much higher at 78.7% as compared to that among National Rural landlessness of 54.8%. Three-fourth Indigenous communities (5 out of 21) host more landless households compared to the Mainstream households (68%). Moreover, Indigenous peoples have lost their traditional ownership over natural resources for development-disaster of the Mainstream community and profit-lust of rent-seeking grabbers, ended up with restrained access of Indigenous peoples to the common resources.

In almost all of the deprivation indicators (27 out of 29), Indigenous households are deprived in higher number than the Mainstream ones. Constructed Deprivation Index explicitly shows grave situation of Indigenous community compared to the Mainstream community (IP: 42.5 against Mainstream: 26.1). Santal and Chandal (index of both of them were 66.7) were found to be most deprived among the Indigenous communities.

Both the identity and class status (lowest socio-economic class) play crucial role in case of discrimination, disparity and poverty faced by the Indigenous households. Considering these roots of poverty and deprivation, the study puts forward wide-ranging suggestions for the human and humane development of Indigenous peoples.