

Livelihood Patterns of Char People: A Study on Maderganj Upazila at Jamalpur

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Abstract

Some of Bangladesh's most vulnerable and impoverished citizens reside in the Char lands. The Chars are home to about 6.5 million people, or 5% of Bangladesh's total population. The present study was carried out at "Pakrul village," a Char land of the Jamuna River in the Maderganj upazila of the Jamalpur district. This study followed a qualitative design to discuss the livelihood of char in Pakrul village, Maderganj Upazila. The study employed the purposive sampling technique with 20 focus group discussions, i.e., with 10 women and 10 men, strengthened by focus group discussions, a semi-structured questionnaire, in-depth interviews, and field visits. The study illustrated the livelihood strategies of people in the char areas and the livelihood options available there. It also explored the major pathways to overcome livelihood vulnerability. The study's findings demonstrated that the residents of Char engage in multiple sources of income such as agriculture, livestock rearing, fishing, daily labour, handicraft, small business, and petty trade, etc. Here, the opportunity for an off-farm livelihood is minimal. Seasonal floods, riverbank erosion, drought, and Char's remote location are the main factors contributing to livelihood vulnerability. Their livelihood was made more precarious by an extremely inadequate communication system and underdeveloped Char shelters. Further, lack of institutional support and inadequate credit facilities made their lives difficult to cope with the situation. Lastly, the study recommends some suggestions for the policy planners and implementers for the future development of the study area. Increased institutional support and improved communication systems can lessen their livelihood vulnerability. Besides, available credit facilities and a developed Char market can change their whole scenario of livelihood in this area.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The geographical location of Bangladesh lies in a region with a monsoon climate. Bangladesh, known as the Bengal delta, is driven by the contributions of three major river basins: the Ganga-Padma, the Brahmaputra-Jamuna, and the Meghna, as well as numerous distributaries and

tributaries (Sarker et al., 2003). The suspended particles (sand and silt) from different sources were carried and deposited by the river channel. The deposited landmass developed by the river channel is known to the people (Bengali) as char land or diara in Bangladesh (Islam, 2010).

The Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Surma-kusira river systems in Bangladesh have created a large number of char lands. Char land, which was created by river systems through their depositional and erosional processes, can be completely or partially connected to the mainland. Due to landlessness and the loss of their means of subsistence caused by riverbank erosion, Char land people in the Jamuna basin have relocated from their ancestral locations (Sarker et al., 2003). The erosion of riverbanks directly affects around one million people. People affected reside both inside and outside the poor embankment (Islam, 2010). The lives of char land people are difficult due to a lack of livelihood stability and shelter, particularly in the lower Brahmaputra (Jamuna River) basin. Riverbank erosion causes people to lose their property as well as their connections with their families. People in Bangladesh who live on riverbanks often lose their jobs and shift to new occupations due to erosion (Islam et al., 2017). Riverbank erosion in the country causes many people to lose their livelihoods each year, including farms, standing crops, and changes in occupation (Onneshan, 2008). The most severe impact of riverbank erosion is on the livelihoods of the char people in Bangladesh. Every year, individuals lose their agricultural land, jobs, and other assets (Saikia & Mahanta, 2023). From the analytical point of view, the purpose of the investigation was to know the livelihood pattern of the people of the char areas, especially to find out the causes of the problems faced and to recommend some strategies to overcome the challenges to the residents of Pakrul village of Charpakerdah union of Madarganj upazila of Jamalpur district. Studies of the Jamuna Char people often focus on their livelihood patterns, social and economic practices in the context of their environment.

In Assam, India, the Brahmaputra River enters Bangladesh by flowing over Nageshwari Police Station in Kurigram District. Later, it was renamed Yamuna. Its length in Bangladesh is about 200 kilometers. Since 1998, the Yamuna River has been subject to massive grazing. Over time, the number of these characters has increased. But since the last decade, due to the creation of silt in the river Yamuna, river breaking, and flow reduction, Madarganj of Jamalpur district, Kurigram, Nageshwari, Ulipur, Chilmari, Roumari, Rajipur, Gaibandha of Gaibandha district, Sundarganj, Phulchhari, Dewanganj, and Saghata in the northern region are directly affected. Islampur, Sonatala of Bogra, Sariahandi, Dhunat, Kazipur of Sirajganj, Sirajganj, Kamarkhand, Bhuapur, Kalihati, Belkuchi, Shahjadpur, Nagpur, Daulatpur, including 27 upazilas of Naogaon, Rangpur, and Jaipurhat districts. Furthermore, the river-based transport system is also severely hindered in the region. There is also a crisis in the transportation of goods along various rivers, including the Aricha-Natakhola, Bahadurabad-Phulcharighat, and Sirajganj-Jagannathganj routes. Frequent shifting of ghats due to fodder shortages has created more serious problems. About 5,000 to 6,000 hectares of land are lost to river erosion every year. Approximately 100,000 people are affected by these erosions each year. River erosion costs this country 25 million dollars every year. Due to siltation and erosion of the River Yamuna, people living in the floodplains face numerous problems, including a lack of shelter, inadequate communication, limited medical facilities, and a shortage of clean drinking water. The aim of our research is to investigate and analyze the problems faced by the people of Char. The primary question guiding our research is to investigate and analyze the livelihood strategies of the people in the Char area.

Generally, the study aims to understand the livelihood patterns of people in the char areas. Specifically, the study aims to know the socio-economic and demographic status of the Char residents; to know the Daily livelihood activities of the Char people; and to explore the various problems and the causes of problems faced by the people living in the Char areas.

This study examined the types of livelihoods and living conditions of people residing in the char areas, focusing on their social, economic, and demographic characteristics. It explored how livelihood strategies have evolved over time and how these strategies continue to reflect vulnerabilities that affect the daily lives of char dwellers. The research also aimed to identify issues hindering improved living standards and to propose recommendations to address these constraints. However, the study is limited in scope due to the use of in-depth interviews with only

ten respondents from Pakrul village in the Pakerdah union of Madarganj upazila, Rajshahi district, selected through convenience sampling. This small sample size restricts the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, constraints such as limited time, participants' occupational commitments, and availability posed challenges during data collection.

2 METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative design to explore the livelihoods of char dwellers in Pakrul village, Madarganj Upazila. The study employed a purposive sampling technique, involving 20 focus group discussions (10 with women and 10 with men), supplemented by a semi-structured questionnaire, in-depth interviews, and field visits. Thematic analysis of data from primary and secondary sources was conducted using Creswell's proposition. Validity and reliability were ensured through triangulation, member checking, and a diverse range of perspectives, including those from different genders and occupations. The research employed a purposive sampling design to achieve diversity in terms of gender, age, and occupation. This consisted of 20 focus group discussions (FGDs), 10 of which involved male respondents (farmers, day laborers, small traders, and youth), and 10 of which involved female respondents (homemakers and women engaged in livelihood activities such as livestock rearing, handicrafts, and petty trade). Every group consisted of 6-8 participants, ensuring it was both large enough and inclusive, while also being manageable for discussions.

2.1 Sampling and Participants

The research employed a purposive sampling technique to achieve diversity across gender, age, and occupation. This consisted of 20 focus group discussions (FGDs), 10 of which involved male respondents (farmers, day laborers, and small traders), and 10 of which involved female respondents (homemakers and women engaged in livelihood activities such as livestock rearing, handicrafts, and petty trade). Every group consisted of 6-8 participants, ensuring it was both large enough and inclusive, while also being manageable for discussions.

2.2 Location of the Study

There are Char residents in many areas in Bangladesh. We conducted a field visit to observe the life and livelihood strategies of the people in the Char area, specifically in a village called Pakrul, located in Pakerdah Union, Madarganj Upazila, Jamalpur District, Mymensingh Division. It lies between 24°47' and 24°59' north latitude and 89°40' and 89°50' east longitude. It is bordered by Islampur and Melandah upazilas to the north and south, respectively, and is home to notable rivers, including the Jamuna. The region encompasses various communities, including the Char people, who are often affected by floods and flooding due to location in the Jamuna floodplains. Research on flood resilience and vulnerability in the region highlights the socio-economic challenges faced by these communities.

2.3 Data Collection

All research has a goal, which is why it uses different levels of scientific technique. The present study was conducted in Pakrul village under the Jamalpur district. Ethnographic and ecological research in the social sciences is distinctive in that it employs a range of methods, including in-depth interviews, observations, participation, case studies, and others. Our basic methodologies included participant observation and case studies, as well as extensive fieldwork. We employed various tactics, beginning with establishing rapport and gathering data. To conduct an accurate study, we first established rapport with the local community. The settlement was home to a diverse population. So, we arrived and posed numerous questions to them. The villagers assumed we had come from a university. As a result, we stated our purpose and presented ourselves to them right away. Then, gradually, we presented all the villagers. Thus, we could establish rapport with farmers, day workers, males and females, young ladies, and children. Then, using deliberate

sampling, we selected ten individuals to participate in the case. We collected the actual data, began the case study, and conducted in-depth interviews with ten respondents. We extensively examined the Char people during their daily activities. Building rapport and observation are critical components of qualitative research. Actually, our core strategy was participatory observation and case study, which we could use to create rapport.

2.4 Sources of Data

This study utilized a well-structured and comprehensive checklist that encompasses key indicators relevant to the study. Conducting research work systematically helps to understand the life system of the people in the Char area. We used various data sources to collect the data. We have collected data from primary and secondary sources. By speaking with local residents, we gathered information about their lifestyle, sources of income, education, and healthcare. The primary source is the main source of the study. Secondary sources are collected from several relevant articles, journals, theses, and other documents.

2.5 Analysis of Data

The analysis of qualitative data was completed through various steps, including transcribing data, interpreting documents and photographs, describing records, and conducting thematic analysis of the data. All these steps are carefully followed in the study to analyze primary data collected from respondents, as well as field reports from the case study and participant observation.

2.6 Validity and Reliability

The validity of the study ensures that the findings are accurate and reliable. The honesty and truthfulness of both the research and the respondents ensure the validity of the study. The validity of the study indicates the veracity of the data that was gathered. The study's findings have revealed real-life experiences based on understanding the livelihood strategies of char people. The study's dependability and consistency are referred to as its reliability. Both the researcher and respondents need to understand the importance of the study and feel confident in the information they share.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A qualitative study is a descriptive study in which the researcher uses no numerical data and instead focuses on the detailed ideas provided by the respondents. To conduct our research, we employed an interview approach. Therefore, we used a few terms that are connected to the goals of the research to characterize the data that we gathered in the field in our fieldwork area. The significance of case studies in offering in-depth understandings of certain subjects, such as people, organizations, or occurrences, is covered in this introduction. Poor demographic conditions indicate a poor socioeconomic structure. Lack of health and communications facilities makes them backwards people. Poor educational conditions focus on less awareness of the present world. No opportunity to perform normal life as usual makes their life difficult. There is a need for GO and NGOs' support for developing their conditions. In order to develop their conditions, income generation programs and various types of instruments are needed. No opportunity to perform cultural and social programs in the Char people's lives. No administrative support in the Char People's life creates a lot of problems. Women are more vulnerable and oppressed by their husbands in their lives. There is no rehabilitation, and the necessary equipment to deal with the disaster.

3.1 Poor demographic conditions indicate a poor socioeconomic structure

The national incidence of poverty stands at around 43.8 percent, while in the char areas, the rate is 86.4 percent. This indicates that 61 percent of people suffer from food insecurity occasionally,

and 31 percent face food scarcity throughout the year (Uddin, 2015). The riverine sand and silt landmasses known as char in Bengali are home to over 5 million people in Bangladesh. These areas are highly vulnerable to sudden and forceful flooding, as well as erosion and land loss, which makes living in the chars both hazardous and insecure. Many charcoal dwellers struggle to produce or afford enough food to eat, and malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies are more prevalent than elsewhere in the country. Solutions to these problems require approaches that help low-income households make the best use of their available resources and cope more effectively with the challenging environment. This bulletin describes how Helen Keller International's homestead food production program provides support to fragile livelihoods in the chars and improves the well-being of the entire household by promoting specially adapted low-cost technologies for gardening and livestock-raising, improving food security and dietary practices, providing employment for women, and a source of income for the household. Following international institutions and activities, many states have begun to protect the rights and interests of the Chakma people, but in this respect, Bangladesh is still lagging behind. While talking about the Government's attitude towards the Char people in Asia. All these groups mostly have different cultures and languages. The Government of Bangladesh does not consider these groups as 'Char Peoples'. The socioeconomic condition of the Char People indicates that they are very poor. Their socioeconomic and educational status are not standard for normal life. They have earned very little money, which is insufficient to support their family life. For economic reasons, they have not been able to fulfill their basic needs.

Respondent "Y" mentioned that,

"My husband stays at home, he has no interest in working because of that, I am working as a day laborer in my area, and I earn 5000 taka per month, which is not sufficient for my family's expenditure."

Respondent "U," said,

"I am working as a farmer, and I have no opportunity to join other occupations."

Respondent "Z" said that,

"I have been farming for many years and have lost everything due to natural disasters. But no government & non-government agency came forward to help."

3.2 Lack of health communications facilities makes them backwards residents

Although research on health-seeking behavior of disadvantaged people is limited in Bangladesh, it is well admitted that compared to other areas, char women, men have limited contacts with physicians and health care services in general (Uddin, 2015). It is hardly surprising to learn that for almost every condition common to both sexes, the outcome for women tends to be poorer in the char Majhira and In terms of accessing health services, the people of this char are slower to notice signs of illness, and when they do, they are less likely to consult their doctors (Uddin, 2015). Health and communication are the most important parameters for the development of any inhabitant. But it is a pity that the communication and health facilities in the char areas are not as advanced as they need to be. There is no modern hospital in the Char area, which is far from the Upazila hospital, and as a result, people do not receive modern treatment to cure their diseases. Generally, most Char people follow traditional medical methods to treat their illnesses. We have observed that there are numerous hospitals and clinics in our field of research, and we have also noted that most people seek medical care from Kabiraj or Ojha, often relying on various superstitions to cure their diseases. We are also surprised to see that most of the char dwellers are now practicing traditional healing to cure diseases. In my field of research, communication facilities are not a primary focus of overall development. Most of the roads are broken, undeveloped, and muddy. People are not able to go to the city easily in case of an emergency.

One of the respondents, "M", said,

"My areas lack adequate communication and health amenities. In our area, there is no modern equipment-related hospital where we can get services for curing diseases. We have no idea about many diseases and how to cure them."

The other respondent, "X", alluded that,

"we are bearing an unbearable life because there are no hospitals and communication facilities in our area. Many people have died due to a lack of treatment."

Also, the respondent, Sultan Sarkar, said that,

"If such an underdeveloped medical system remains in this area, then we will also die suddenly due to lack of treatment."

3.3 The poor state of education leads to low awareness of the present world

Education is very important in everyone's life. No one can achieve a high position in their career without education. No nation can develop without education. So, it is rightly said that "education is the backbone of a nation." Bangladesh is a developing country, and most of the people live below the poverty line. Education in our country has become a global problem. Education creates awareness among people. This is very important for anyone's life. It helps us to grow and develop. Napoleon Bonaparte said, "Give me an educated mother; I promise you the birth of a civilized, educated nation." Access to education must be ensured for the development and awareness generation of any nation or backwards people.

Respondent said,

"He has two sons and three daughters. His sons and daughters are all highly educated. His sons work in government jobs in Jamalpur Sadar Upazila. Now they have shifted from the char area and settled in the upazila headquarters. His family is aware of the present world and has many ideas about science."

However, the respondent "X" stated that,

"none of his 7 children are educated; they live below the poverty line. There is no scope for better quality because all the children are illiterate. They don't know their rights. They don't know the problems and don't know how to solve them."

Respondent "L" said that,

"his son is a rickshaw driver. He passed the 3rd class; as a result, he did not get a higher job in the job sector. They are very poor. His income is not enough to control their lives; he is the only earning member of their family. They are unaware of their health and their rights."

The respondent "O" said that,

"No one in their family is educated. All of them are farmers. They do not allow their children to go to school, due to which they do not know about the present world."

The respondent "P" said,

"He has studied a little, so he knows more about agriculture than others, even though he does farm in the village."

Respondent "R" said that,

"due to the number of 6 members in his family and financial constraints, he could not afford to educate everyone. So many people don't know about it."

3.4 Women were more vulnerable and were assumed by their husbands in the Char area

The majority of char women live with extreme poverty, social marginalization, low literacy rates, and the need to cope with annual floods and displacement caused by periodic erosion events. Women are the most vulnerable group in every community and in many places. Women are not respected in society. Women have to work hard throughout the day. Women work much harder than men. Still, women do not get their respect; they are always abused by men, tortured, and forced to give dowry; there is no empowerment of women; women are left behind in everything. The women in the char area faced numerous problems, including quarrels within families due to low family income.

One of our women respondents mentioned that,

"I used to have quarrels with my husband due to the decrease in family income. My husband used to torture me physically and mentally."

The other women respondents said,

"Women are not always able to take steps regarding the family, and there are problems due to dowry. Girls are lagging behind in education, and girls are being married off at a young age."

3.5 No opportunity to perform normal life as they usually do in normal activity

Technical training must be conducted to develop skilled human resources. To supply various agricultural products and train women living in the char areas in various handicrafts, thereby ensuring their financial stability. To assist them with various agricultural inputs and agricultural development techniques. Char dwellers can be developed as the working class of the country if their work resources are increased and initiatives are taken in various ways; then the country will develop. Then the people of Char will be able to live a normal life, and the country will move towards development.

Respondent "L" said,

"They don't get any help from the government. If they receive support from various governments, private, and other organizations. Then there will be changes in life. "

One woman respondent said,

"Women who are sitting at home and spending time idly. Training these women in various crafts, designs, and tailoring will make the char areas financially stable."

Respondent "X" said,

"If different products and improved agricultural practices can be introduced. New opportunities will emerge in the agricultural sector."

the other respondent said,

"If the conscious society and the government helped everyone with the training and modern equipment to be productive in the agriculture sector as well as prevent the erosion of char land, the people of the char areas would be happy, and the unemployment rate in the country would be reduced."

3.6 Need GO and NGOs' support for developing their conditions

During this time, people take loans from mohajans, netas (political leaders), NGOs, relatives, and other money lenders at high interest rates to get treatment for ailing family members. For this loan, they become like slave of those moneylenders (Noman, 2020). The residents of the char areas are facing various problems, including health, food, water, education, and housing. They

are not aware of various social problems like dowry and child marriage. Water problems and unsanitary conditions, natural disasters, and the underdevelopment of infrastructure make life difficult. If various NGOs and the GOS come forward, their society will be saved from this bad situation. They will be aware of their rights. That's the biggest problem. The locally dominant political groups want to seize their land, and the meager development grants do not actually develop the char areas. If GO and various NGOs come forward against it, they will be able to build a better society and remove many problems.

A respondent said,

"They lost their homes, and local political leaders grabbed their land and harassed them."

Respondent "X" said that,

"They are suffering from various social problems like water, food, education, health, natural calamities, etc. If various NGOs go and help them by giving them loans in such a situation that they will be able to overcome the problems and will prosper morally and socially."

Respondent "M" said,

"During various natural disasters, they do not receive any government assistance before or after the disaster. During and after this natural disaster, their electricity was cut off, roads were damaged, and even their living space was washed away in the river."

3.7 Income-generating programs and different types of instruments for developing their lives

For an income generative program for char populations, it's important to provide income-generating assets like livestock, offer market access and training for livelihood diversification, ensure resilience against environmental shocks (e.g., floods), and foster social capital through community groups and access to essential services like health and sanitation (Paul & Islam, 2015). People from other regions and the rich generally look down on those living in char areas in various ways. They are often overlooked in various activities and opportunities within society. They are deprived of their rights and jobs. They want to live a normal life. They are not different people. They want to live with basic rights and have access to the general public. Char areas, like other areas, still lack a modern touch. Apart from a few agricultural machines (power tillers, paddy threshing mills, pump machines) in the char areas, modern technology equipment did not reach

Respondent "X" said,

"They do not get various benefits from the government. They are deprived of the facilities that a common citizen gets. "

Respondent "Y" said,

"If they are given the same opportunities as others, they can contribute to the development of society."

Respondent "M" said,

"If we are given opportunities according to our work, then we can contribute to the development of our country and society. This will benefit the society and the country. "

3.8 No opportunity to perform cultural and social programs among the Char people

As they live at the edge in terms of environmental and social context, the way of life there in Char is a little different from that of mainland people (Mahamud, 2011). The people of the char areas often face natural disasters and various problems, which often prevent them from holding cultural and social events. Sometimes there is no opportunity to celebrate religious

programs and ceremonies. Especially due to economic weakness, natural disasters, and a lack of space to hold necessary events, among other factors. Cultural activities encompass sports or events that contribute to or enhance the social, physical, or psychological well-being of the public. Some of the cultural events include celebrating festivals, participating in charity events, attending sports events, visiting national parks, taking heritage tours, and competing in dance and music competitions. Other social activities include food assistance, housing, health insurance, and various other services. But there are always obstacles and dangers. Therefore, most of the time there is no opportunity to hold social and cultural programs in the char areas.

Respondent "N" said that,

"due to river erosion, drought, excessive rain, and various natural disasters at different times, many places, including playgrounds, have been submerged in the river, so there is a lack of space to hold any cultural and social events."

Respondent "O" explained,

"The mosque is not able to hold religious ceremonies due to the sinking."

Another respondent, "L", said,

"Due to various problems and superstitions in the char areas, she cannot celebrate any festival, cultural event, or any dance competition."

3.9 No Administrative support for char people

Administrative support barriers for Char people include a complex and opaque bureaucratic system that requires informal payments and creates procedural inefficiencies. The people of the Char region belong to the marginalized communities of Bangladesh (Anonymous, 2014). Various problems, including natural disasters in the Char region, have had a huge impact on these residents. Since they are already isolated from everyone, these char dwellers become very helpless due to a lack of adequate work during natural disasters and various problems. They had to endure various adversities, including a lack of education, inadequate infrastructure, insufficient drinking water, limited access to hospitals and clinics, unemployment, natural disasters, and financial crises resulting from a lack of housing.

Respondent "Y" said that,

"We also had days without any food; the whole family had to go without food. I heard about the government's food donation, but I did not get any help."

The respondent "Z" said,

"We need treatment for various diseases, but we cannot go for treatment as there are no hospitals and clinics nearby."

Respondent "Q" said that,

"Although study programs are conducted on the internet and TV, our children could not attend these classes as they did not have smartphones or televisions. As a result, many children have dropped out of school."

According to respondent "R",

"It became very difficult for us to survive. As the roads are bad and the market is far away, the cropland is wasted as it is not sold on time. But we didn't get any help from the government."

Respondent "T" said,

"Political leaders in our char areas make promises of development during elections, but after getting elected, there is not a single effort for development."

Case Study One

X is a resident of Pakrul Char. She is 35 years old. She has 2 sons and 2 daughters. She didn't study. She is a housewife and a laborer by profession. She said she had to go through a lot of problems when her husband came home after the marriage. Sometimes there were quarrels over financial problems; her husband used to torture her over dowry, and there was no job opportunity in the char area except for agricultural day labor. She believes that if a government agency had trained the women of the char area in various crafts, including sewing, then there would be a possibility of financial stability within the family. She also said that women do not get medical care due to various diseases and hospitals being far away during childbirth.

Case Study Two

Y is a resident of Pakrul Char. Age 35. A farmer by profession, he studied up to the sixth class. He lives in a joint family of 6 members, including his parents. His monthly income is Rs 7000. He said that his studies were stopped due to the distance from school and financial problems. He mentioned that due to heavy rainfall during the rainy season, the river has been eroded, and the mosques, villages, crop fields, roads, and land have been submerged in the river. Half of the land is now under the river. As there are no schools in the area, the children are unable to go to school. There is only one clinic in the area that lacks adequate health services. No fertilizers and various modern technologies can be used in agriculture due to high prices and a lack of finances. He also said that after a few years, the char area may be completely submerged in the river.

Case Study Three

Z is a resident of Pakrul Char. He is 41 years old. He is a farmer by profession. He could not study far. He studied till class 8. He has 2 sons and 2 daughters. The total number of family members is 6. His monthly income is BDT 8000. He said that due to his financial problems, he was unable to provide his sons and daughters with adequate educational facilities and had to risk his life due to living in a low-lying area; every year, there is a fear of river erosion. There is also the threat of flooding during the rainy season. Almost all the land is lost to river erosion, due to which he is not able to cultivate enough crops. When there is a flood, there is a lack of clean water, and many people fall ill due to a lack of clean water. The nearest health complex is inaccessible due to a poor transport system. There are no medicines in the health complex. also, He said that if a dam had been built, they could have lived in some peace.

Case Study Four

M is a resident of Pakrul-Jamunachar in the Madarganj upazila of the Jamalpur district. Age 56. He is a farmer by profession. His family consists of six members in a joint family, and none of them is educated. According to him, apart from farming, he rears cows and goats and runs a seasonal business, earning Tk5000 per month. Long ago, he owned some land, but due to river erosion and natural disasters, half of it has been submerged in the river. He had 4 bigha of land; now, only 25 percent is surviving. But they received no help from the government. Life has to suffer a lot. He said that most breaks occur during monsoons. Starting from the month of Baisakh, the river remains in full flow until the months of Ashwin and Kartik. At that time, their communication system went down. No crops can grow on the land at that time. He also said that they don't have anything to say about medical care; they don't get medical care, and they don't have access to safe water, and no organization works in the char areas.

3.10 Major Discussions

According to this study, most people are aged 40-60 years old, with some belonging to the 40-45 age group. It is also found that most of them are unemployed and dependent on agricultural work for their livelihood. Employment for the landless in the char typically involves working as daily wage laborers in agricultural fields (Jansen, 1987, p. 2; Baqee, 1985, p. 5). Additionally,

most people are engaged in agriculture, with some serving as daily laborers, while others are employed in various occupations. The data indicate that a significant number of respondents come from lower-class families. This research has shown that the people of the Char area are very helpless. In poor condition, they do not get any facilities from the government. Many people in the area are unaware of nutrition and drinking clean water, as a result of which they suffer from various diseases. Their main problem is that most of the land has been lost due to river erosion. Riverbank erosion worsens people's lives, leaving them shelterless and sleepless during the rainy season (Environmental and Geographical Information System, 2000; Islam, 2010). People become homeless due to riverbank erosion every year in Bangladesh (Islam, 2018). For example, erosion happened in nearly 94 Upazila out of 489 Upazila in 2013 (Government of Bangladesh, 2014).

However, usually they are facing many problems in these situations. It is a clear observation that, according to most of the respondents, the economic condition has a major impact on the people of Char area. People in rural area in Bangladesh involve in agricultural activities but their agricultural land is eroded by river stream in rainy season then local people shift their occupation to other occupations (Environmental and Geographical Information System, 2000). Most of the respondents have no reservation; also, it is seen that most of the people are illiterate and have no opportunity to acquire knowledge. Even during natural calamities, their children cannot go to school; if they are sick, they cannot be taken to the hospital because boat fare is 300-400 per person, whereas their income is 300-400. During natural calamities, they are forced to sit at home, risking their lives as they are unable to continue their daily earning activities due to this bad situation. They cannot take proper food during this time. During disasters—natural and manmade—women, children, and old people's lives are most vulnerable, and Women and girls are raped, embarrassed and insecure, especially during manmade disasters. Also, the women's gender roles are disrupted because of the scarcity of fuel, water collection and difficulties of cooking food (Noman, 2020).

In this survey, we find that most of people have good relationships with their family and relatives. They suffer from mental illness when they cannot communicate with each other during various calamities. Several facts are also responsible for this condition, like they are unaware of the new technology. Char people have to be educated; otherwise, their development is impossible. The government should ensure their support and ensure their proper legal rights. Medical facilities in their area are very poor. Living in remote areas, they require special support and special care. They are very helpless people. During this time people take loan from mohajans, neta(political leaders), NGOs, relatives and other money lenders with high rates of interest for getting treatment for ailing members of their families. For this loan they become like the slave of those money lenders (Noman, 2020). The government should provide help in any time of danger. They need education and government support for the development of their area. They should be introduced to new modern technologies. They have no knowledge of modern farming systems and no modern machinery for technical agriculture. Their sanitation condition is not good. As they lack a proper sanitation system, it significantly affects their health. On the other hand, they lack nutritional knowledge. Ensuring access to healthcare services for those in dire circumstances is crucial. To provide sustainable, long-term economic relief for the Char people of Bangladesh, including universal access to public services and comprehensive social protection through targeted programs.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Due to river erosion and various other reasons, the people of the Pakrul Char area, located on the banks of the Jamuna, have been facing numerous problems. For example, in the economic, educational, social, and infrastructure sectors. Also, they are deprived of many opportunities and facilities. Erosion occurs regularly, especially during the rainy season. The Char land people who live outside the embankment are mostly affected. Some people live inside the poor (weak and low height) embankment affected by riverbank erosion-induced floods. The Char Land people live with danger due to riverbank erosion. Every year, they lose their employment, agricultural land, settlement, and property due to riverbank erosion.

The people living in the char land are primarily farmers and seasonal laborers, cultivating agricultural crops throughout the year in the various areas. During the rainy season, riverbank erosion occurs at a tremendous rate due to the rapid streams of rainwater. They are trying to change their occupation, and some are shifting their agricultural calendar, types, and times. People lose their jobs, homes, and property, and ultimately, they are displaced to other areas for survival due to riverbank erosion. The study areas require recommendations, such as deep dredging of the riverbed, high and strong embankments, low-interest loans for local people, and intensive research and plans to address riverbank erosion-induced problems. Additionally, the government and various NGOs should come together to address these issues.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The people of the Char area face many problems. Most of the families in the village are illiterate. Most of the family members are unable to meet their basic needs as they live in vulnerable Char areas. They can't sell their produce in the market. There are no health facilities. They can't drink clean water. It is not easy to communicate with family members. Therefore, there are numerous recommendations that help the people of the char area resolve all their problems. Adequate food supply should be ensured. Various plans should be formulated and implemented to improve the quality of their social, economic, and educational infrastructure, so that every person can access proper education and other facilities. They need modern medical and e-based services to ensure quality health facilities, so that every person can easily access health services. Creating sustainable infrastructure, connectivity, education, and training in health and nutrition, as well as income-generating jobs, and fostering new employment opportunities are necessary to build a better future for the people of the char areas. Below are some recommendations for the area.

The government and non-government organizations should work in coordination to bring dynamism in social development to ensure meaningful development in the lives of the people of Char. The fertility potential of Char soil should be capitalized, and the agro-based economic enterprise among the people of the Char should be further encouraged. The overall economic development has to be accelerated by ensuring the liveability in the old char areas through planned river governance. Affordable speedboats and engine-powered boats for communication should be arranged for the benefit of all, including pregnant mothers, teachers, government officials, and NGO workers. Quickly from a Char Development Board and formulate Char policies to improve the living standards of the people of the char areas. The education system needs to be reformed. Hospitals, medical centers, and necessary medicines should be provided to develop health services and infrastructure in the char areas. The char areas are prone to general flooding, so flood prevention and management should be developed to prevent flooding. Women need to be educated and empowered so that they can contribute to the economic development of their families. The people of the char areas are more dependent on agriculture, so it is necessary to provide modern and sustainable agricultural technology to the farmers. Shelter homes should be set up for the people of the area.

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