
LIVELIHOOD STATUS OF THE FISHERS' COMMUNITY IN THE CHALAN BEEL AREA (GURUDASPUR UPAZILA, NATORE DISTRICT) IN BANGLADESH.

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ABSTRACT

The study on socio-economic condition of Fishermen of the Chalan beel under Gurudaspur Thana of Natore District in Bangladesh represents the actual Fishers' community of Bangladesh. The socio-economic position of the fishing communities were presented on the basis of age group, family size, educational status, main and subsidiary occupation, fishing trends, daily income patterns, housing patterns, use of electricity, fuel use, credit supply, health, nutrition, sanitation etc. The study was conducted in Gurudaspur Thana under Natore District of Bangladesh from June 2013 to July 2014. Fifty fishermen from 50 families were interviewed. Results revealed that 94% respondents were married and age varied between 30 and 45 years. It was found that 20-30 age groups were the major manpower of the community. All most all the fishermen were Muslim (70%). Most of the people of the community were illiterate (60%) and among all of the school going children 58% were boys and 42% were girls. Above fifty percent people lived in nuclear family. Only 20% fishers lived in brick-wall and tin roofed house 92% fishermen were connected with electricity line. 74% families use semi-pacca latrine surrounded by nylon bag and 12% families use open latrine. 80% fishermen visit the doctors for their treatment. Annual household income of maximum beneficiaries (44%) was below BDT 30,000 and above BDT 50,000 found in only 4% cases. Most of the fishermen do not know the fishing law, although the law mostly made for the fishermen. In the present study, educational, organizational, and technical credit support were very crucial to develop their better socio-economic conditions.

Keywords: Fishermen, livelihood, fishing community, Chalan beel.

Introduction

A livelihood is made up of the capabilities, activities, and assets (including both material and social resource) that contribute to a means of living. According to Chambers and Conway (1992) livelihood comprises the capabilities, the assets (natural, physical, human, financial and social), the activities and the accesses to these that together determine the living gained by the individual household. Fisheries, especially in developing countries, contribute to livelihood in a range of ways; directly as food as a source of income and through other social benefits, such as reduced vulnerability to poverty. Fisheries provides livelihood to about 12 million people of the country

directly or indirectly and other ancillary fishery activities (DoF2013). Fishing in Bangladesh has traditionally been an occupation of members of particular lower caste Hindu. Fishermen community is deemed to be one of the most vulnerable communities in terms of their livelihood opportunities in Bangladesh (Farhana and Naser 2006). Fishing is main occupation for them which cannot be carried out throughout the year; also they lack alternative job opportunities. For proper development in any place it is essential to improve the livelihood of people of all categories, especially the vulnerable one. Fishermen community belongs to this category. Baseline information is essential to initiate proper developmental steps and there is no sufficient information about livelihood of fishermen community in Bangladesh. However, few studies on socio-economic conditions of fishermen were carried out by Kostori (2012), Flowra *et al.* (2009) and Joadder (2008) but all these efforts lack specific information of livelihood like access to organizations, livelihood vulnerabilities and outcomes. In this study these components of livelihood were included in addition to other common parameters. Thus the present study was conducted with the following specific objectives- to know about: basic profile of the fishermen household (HH) like educational status, sexes, experience, income etc. Utilization of land resources; access to different organizations; HH nutrition, and livelihood vulnerabilities and outcomes. Research efforts for socio-economic condition of fishermen of the Mail Beel under Mohanpur Thana, Rajshahi and livelihood status of the fishers' community in Mongla under Bagerhat area were well documented by Joadder (2008) and Haq *et al.* (2005) respectively. However the study on the socio-economic condition of fishermen of the Chalan Beel especially at Gurudaspur Upazilla remained ignored. Hence, an attempt has been made to identify the present socio-economic status of the fishermen of the Chalan Beel area especially at Gurudaspur Upazilla under Natore district, to assess the problems confronted by the fishermen in fishing and trading fish.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study has been carried on the socio-economic and demographic condition of fishermen of Chalan beel Gurudaspur Upazilla of Natore district. The study has been carried on during the period of June 2013 to July 2014.

Field survey and data collection: For the collection of data regarding socio-economic issues, field surveys were made in 50 families of the Chalan beel Gurudaspur Upazilla of Natore district. A structural questionnaire survey was purposively developed, pretested and updated with the necessary corrections.

Data Analysis: Collected data and information obtained from the survey we accumulated, grouped and interpreted according to the objective as well as parameters. Some data contained numeric

and some contained narrative facts. The data were then presented in graphs and tabular forms. Data were analyzed using MS Excel 2003.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Age structure: The survey revealed that only male fishermen were involved in direct fishing in the study area, and their age ranges from 20 to 30 years, they constituted 38% of the total respondents. Percentage of fishermen decreased for below 20 years age (2%) due to occasional working and 50 to above 60 years age groups (6%) and (4%) due to ageing.

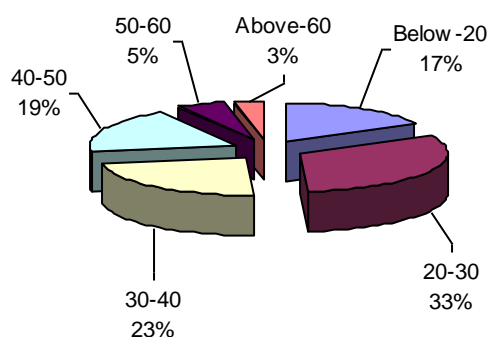


Figure 1. Age structure of fishermen.

Religion and marital status: Inquiries were made to see the marital status of the people of the study area. It was found that in the middle age group (30-40) majority (94%) was married while the unmarried responded was only 6%. Ahamed (1996) in Tangail, Mannu (1996) in Kuakata, and Samima (2000) in Gallamari recorded 94%, 92% and 70% married fishermen respectively. Hasan and Mahamud (2002) studied on the coastal fishing community, Kuakata showed that 89.39% fishermen were married and rest 10.61% was single. So the present result is more and less similar to those results.

In the study area most of the inhabitants were found Muslim (70%) and remaining 30% were Hindus. According to Islam et al. (2013), all the fisherman were belonging to the Hindus religion and it is a common trend in Bangladesh that almost all the by-born fishermen or fishing community are belonging to the Hindus religion. Alam (2003) noted that, social changes are related not only economic factors, but also to religious factors. Religion can play very important role in the socio-cultural environmental life of people of a given area, and can act as a notable constraint or modifies in social change. The study of Chantarasi (1994).and Rabbani and Sarker (1997) in Sundarbans Reserve Forest sated that most fishermen were Muslim (68.33%). Study by Hassan and Mahmud (2002) on the coastal fishing community in Kuakata showed that the

majority of fishermen were Muslim (93.94%). Hindu was found at 32% at Sundarban (Ahmed 1999).

Family type and size: Three family types were found among the fishermen, which are-Nuclear family: Consisting of husband, wife and their children only, (45, 60%). Extended: Consisting of parents, children and other relatives such as father, mother, brother-in-law, Sister in-law, nephew, niece, grandson, granddaughter, unmarried brother and sister, (19, 25.33%). Joint: Consisting of two more related nuclear, extended family, 11, (14.67%). The family types of the fishermen shows that 60% of nuclear type, 14.67% extended 25.33% joint family.

Family size is of great importance in socio-economic status and livelihood. The families were classified according to the number of members'. Most of the family members are illiterate and early marriage is the common scenario in the community because of poverty.

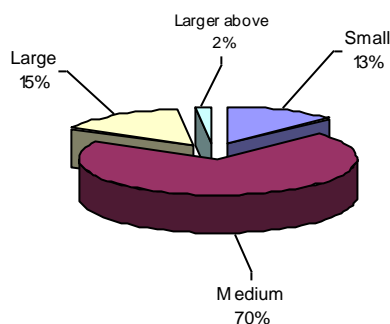


Figure 2. Family size status of the fishermen.

Educational status: The illiteracy level of majority fishermen (60%) in the study area was found illiterate and only a small portion (10%) passed SSC/HSC examinations (Figure 3). Among the total school going children, 58% were boys and 42% were girls. Different scenario was found by Hassan and Mahmud (2002) who recorded 96.9% illiterate fishermen in the coastal fishing community of the Kalapara village. Study by Mahabubullah (1986) in Sundarban and Ahmed (1996) in Tangail revealed literacy rates of the respondents were 45% and 68% respectively.

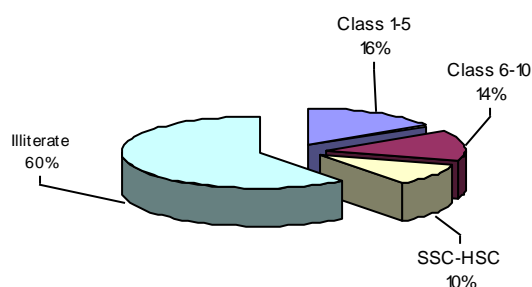


Figure 3: Educational status of the fishermen

Occupation: Different types of fisheries occupation were identified which are fishing, fish trading, fish drying, net making. The study found that 52% fishermen were engaged in fishing profession from the period of their father, 16% from their grand father and 32% from family tradition. Fishermen were engaged in subsidiary occupation simultaneously and or during off-period of fishing. In this study the highest (75%) fishermen were engaged to sell their labor in agricultural sector as their second occupation. 9% and 7% of fishermen were engaged in fish trading and van-puller and 9% are engaged in other works (day labor) as their second occupation.

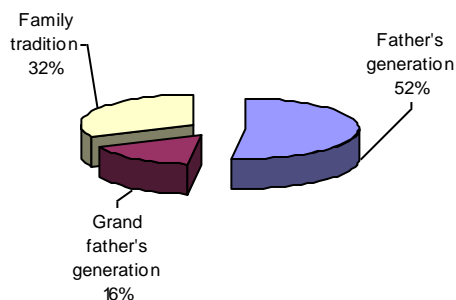


Figure 4. Principal occupation of fishermen.

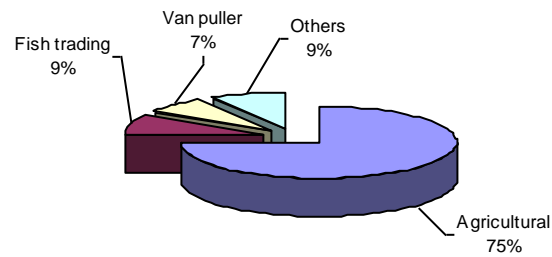


Figure 5. Off-season occupation of fishermen.

Housing Pattern: Solvent persons always try to build their house in permanent nature but the poor section of the society cannot do it. It is also the indicator of one's economic capability. In this study most of the fishermen (i.e. 97%) live in their personal land and only 3% in Khash land. Our study reveals that the housing condition of most of the fishermen are poor their houses are made of mud and one kind of wood leaves and this finding is consistent with that of Ahmed (1999). Four major categories of houses were found, mud wall and tin roof was 75%, mud wall and thatch roof was 18%, brick wall and tin roof was 2% and both wall and roof cover bamboo and thatch was 5%.

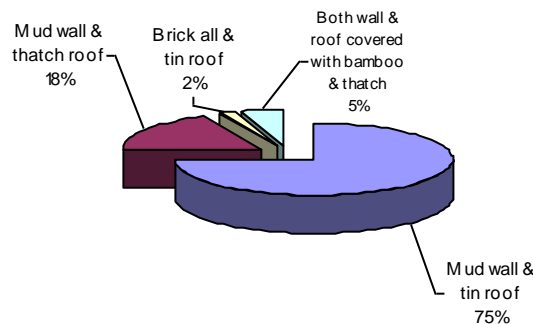


Figure 6: Housing Pattern of fishermen.

Use of electricity: There were 92% fishermen connected with electricity line and only 8% fishermen were not connected with electricity line. DoF (1996) reported from that only 2% fishermen use electricity. Samim (2000) reported that 20% used electricity in Gollamari fishing community Kostori (2012) reported 48% fishermen had no electricity facility in a community of chalanbeel under Tarash Thana in Sirajgonj District. The electricity facility of Gurudaspur

Upazilla under Natore district fisherman community was good due to supply of electricity has been increased in Bangladesh.

Gross annual household income: Fishers family income (DDT) were categorized into four groups: 'below 30000', '30000 to below 40000', '40000 to below 50000' and 'above 50000'. The maximum 'respondent's (44%) income was found in 'below 30000' groups whereas the lowest income was found in 'above 50000' group in the surveyed area.

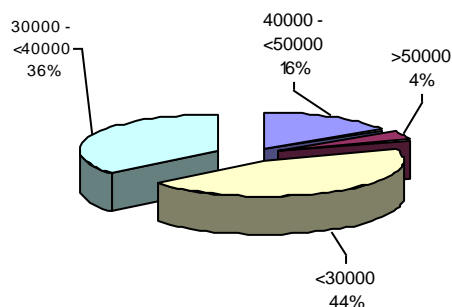


Figure 7: Annual income of the fishermen's households

Sanitation: The survey reveals that only 14% families use pacca latrine, 74% use semi-pacca latrine surrounded by nylon bag or thatch wall, 12% families use open latrine, using agricultural land, crop field, ails (boundaries of the land), canals, bushy area and hidden place as latrine. Because of these peoples environment of the fishing villages become unhygienic and nuisance for others. Due to use of open latrine 'environment especially in rainy season, the rivers and beels are polluted.

Livestock and poultry rearing: The study showed an encouraging picture regarding ownership and rearing of livestock and poultry. Most of the families had cow and poultry in their possession. The study revealed that there were 10% fishermen who reared cow, 70% fisherman who reared poultry and only 20% respondents reared goat. Different result was recorded by Mahabubullah (1986) who mentioned that 82.30% fish farmer had no animal and poultry. This result is quite different from the present study.

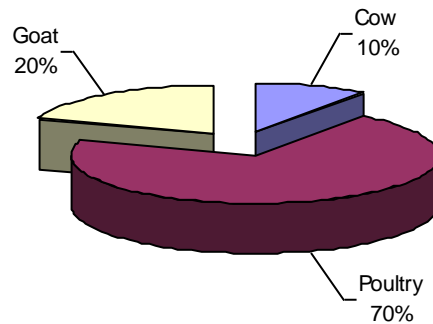


Figure 8: Livestock and poultry rearing status

Food and nutrition intake: Investigation was carried out on intake of some major food items like fish, meat, vegetable, pulse, milk and egg. It was recorded that maximum 50% respondent took fish and only 5% took milk.

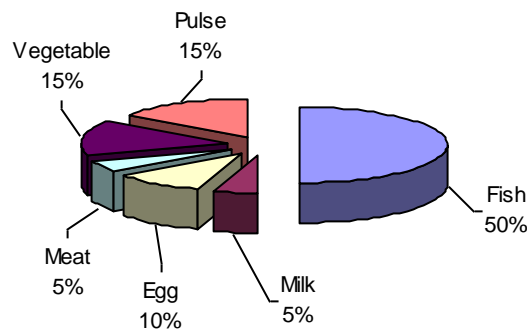


Figure 9: Status of nutrient sources in the diet with rice.

Women's contribution in various activities: Most of the women in the study area were found home makers. They are the main worker for homestead agriculture activities. They also engaged in net making, stitching, and basket maker. Maximum women 80% engaged in homestead agriculture activities.

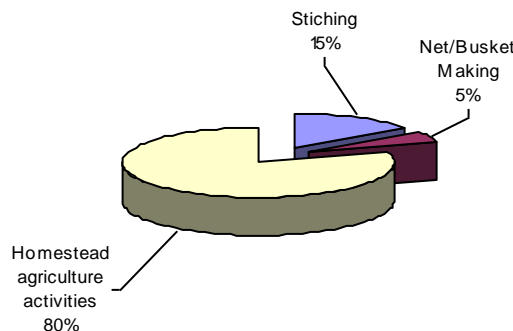


Figure 13: Participation in various activities, other than household works, by the women.

Vulnerability contexts: All the fishermen in the study area were vulnerable to Chalan beel, Gurudaspur Upazilla of Natore District a situation when water logging takes place during monsoon time due to lack of sufficient water drainage system.

Livelihood outcomes: In spite of having poor resources, livelihood outcomes of fishing were positive. The fishermen increased their income, food security and other basic needs. A total of 70% fishermen reported better socio-economic conditions during the survey period. Similar results also reported by Haider *et al.* (2011). Livelihood outcomes can be thought of as the inverse of poverty. Contributing to the eradication of poverty and food insecurity depends on equitable access to the resources, access of disadvantaged group to sufficient, safe and nutritionally adequate food (Scoones 1998).

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