



Institute of Social Studies

Graduate School Of Development Studies

**Understanding the Livelihoods Situation of Ethnic
Minority Women in the Hills of Bangladesh, Pressures
and Prospects for Change**

A Research Paper presented by:

**Md. Habibur Rahman Khan
(Bangladesh)**

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for Obtaining the Degree of

Master of Arts in Development Studies

Specialisation :

HUMAN RESOURCES AND EMPLOYMENT

Members of the Examining Committee

**Dr. John Cameron
Dr. Irene van Staveren**

The Hague, December 2005

This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the Institute of Social Studies; the views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

Research papers and theses are not made available for outside circulation by the Institute.

Enquiries:

Postal Address:

**Institute of Social Studies
P.O. Box 29776
2502 LT, The Hague
The Netherlands**

Telephone: -31-70-4260 460

Cables: SOCINST

Telex: 31491 ISS NL

Telefax: -31-7-4260 799

e-mail: postmaster@iss.nl

Location:

**Kortenaerkade 12
2518 AX, The Hague
The Netherlands**

Acknowledgements

I would like to render my utmost gratitude and thanks to my supervisor Professor John Cameron for his comments and constant support in carrying out this research. Similar gratitude and thanks I convey to my second reader Professor Irene van Staveren for her suggestions I used for the development of this paper.

Thanks to the HRE students, administrative and teaching staff, fellow Bangladeshi and international participants, the ISS, the nuffic, the Dutch government and people for their all support I enjoyed during my study in the Netherlands.

Finally, I express my gratitude to my wife and son, relatives and friends who encouraged and helped me for my overseas study and this research and missed me for more than a year.

Dedication

I dedicate this study to my father Md. Moslim Uddin Khan and to the memory of my mother Late Saleha Khatoon who rendered their best efforts for my real education.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of various factors on the performance of a system. The study is organized as follows: Section 2 describes the methodology used in the study. Section 3 presents the results of the study. Section 4 discusses the implications of the findings. Section 5 concludes the study.

1. Introduction
2. Methodology
3. Results
4. Discussion
5. Conclusion

Table of Contents

<i>Chapter 1: Introduction to the Problem</i>	7
1.1 Background of the Research.....	7
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	8
1.3 Justification and Relevance of the Study.....	10
1.4 Objectives of the Research.....	11
1.5 Research Question.....	11
1.6 Methodology and Sources of Information.....	11
1.7 Limitations of the Study.....	12
<i>Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework</i>	13
2.1 Politically Marginalised and Resistant Communities.....	13
2.2 Linguistic and Faith Communities.....	14
2.3 Livelihoods Framework and Gendered Roles.....	15
2.4 Shifting Cultivation and Gender.....	17
2.5 Intra-Household Bargaining with Both Cooperation and Conflict between Genders.....	18
2.6 Migration – Histories of Settlement and Gender Implications of Movement.....	19
2.7 A Summary of Concepts/Models Used in This Research.....	20
<i>Chapter 3: Pressures on Marginalised Ethnic Groups as an International Concern</i>	22
3.1 Introduction.....	22
3.2 The Maori of New Zealand.....	24

3.3 The Zapatista of Mexico.....	26
3.4 The Hill People of Vietnam.....	28
3.5 The Maasai of Sub-Saharan Africa.....	29

Chapter 4: Marginalised Ethnic Groups in the Hills of

Bangladesh.....32

4.1 Introduction.....	32
4.2 Chakma.....	33
4.3 Marma.....	33
4.4 Tripura.....	34
4.5 Mro.....	35
4.6 Tanchangya.....	36
4.7 Bawm.....	36
4.8 Pankhua.....	37
4.9 Khyang.....	37
4.10 Chak.....	38
4.11 Khumi.....	38
4.12 Lushai.....	39

Chapter 5: The New Settlement and the Pressures on Ethnic

Minority Women41

5.1 The Hills and the Hill Peoples as Seen from the Rest of Bangladesh.....	41
5.2 The Settlers and the Process of Settlement in the Hills.....	42
5.3 The Lives and Struggle for Livelihoods of the Hill Women.....	47
5.4 How are the Settlers Affecting the Livelihoods of Ethnic Hill People.....	49

Chapter 6: Difficulties on the Way to Improvement of

<i>Ethnic Women's Lives</i>	54
6.1 Introduction.....	54
6.2 Pressure on Livelihoods.....	55
6.3 Lack of Trust of Government.....	56
6.4 Presence of Security Forces.....	56
6.5 Burden of Unpaid Household Chore and Low Income from Paid Work.....	57
6.6 Lack of Formal Ownership of Land.....	58
6.7 Multifarious Social Discriminations.....	59
Chapter 7: Conclusion	61
Bibliography	67

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Problem

1.1 Background to the Research

Bangladesh is considered as the largest delta in the world. Almost 90% area of this country is a low-lying flat plain alluvial deposit of river and the rest 10% is comprised of low and middle-high hills spreading over three districts. Bangladesh is overwhelmingly a rural and a very thickly populated country. Though the hill districts are not as thickly populated as the plains, yet poverty has been predominantly prevailing in the hills making the women more destitute there. It was difficult to implement development programmes in the hill districts during the past days of political unrest.

The hill districts of Bangladesh lie in the south-eastern part of the country. These districts had become a part of the British colonial territory in 1760. A number of special features distinguish the hill regions from rest of the country. Its hilly and forested land is considered suitable by its ethnic minority inhabitants for 'jum' cultivation. Jum, a special pattern of crop cultivation, is undertaken on hill slopes, typically covered with various kinds of trees and shrubs. Preparation of

Picture 1: Preparation of land for jum cultivation



land includes cleaning of all vegetation except big trees in dry season, in the month from February to May. These are set on fire when dried under the sun. When rain comes down, the ashes spread over the hill slopes and fertilize the land. Jum cultivation does not require plough or tilling the soil; rather, it requires regularly spaced holes in ground with a dibbing stick. A mix of different varieties of seeds e.g. rice, maize, pulses, oilseeds, vegetables, small millets, cotton are placed in each holes. This type of inter-plantation is the characteristic of jum cultivation. The same jum plot yields a stream of crop harvests, overlapping over time to a certain extent, as these seeds grow and mature at different times. When the harvesting of all crops has been completed, the land has to be left fallow for several years to get back its fertility. The pursuit of jum along with hunting and gathering in forests gives the livelihoods, the society and material culture of the hill people many distinctive characteristics compared to the people of the plains.

The whole of hill territory is surrounded by the Indian States of Tripura on the north, Mizoram on the east; Myanmar on the south and east, and Chittagong district on the west. When the hill area of the then East Bengal territory (now Bangladesh) was incorporated into the British administration in 1760, eleven ethnic groups inhabited in that region. They were: Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Mro, Tanchangya, Bawm, Pankhua, Khyang, Chak, Khumi and Lushai. These groups were different from each other in terms of religion, tradition and customs, language, politics and social practices. They also preferred to live in separate habitats. Till today these groups have been striving to uphold their own tradition and separated entity.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The hill districts of Bangladesh are divided into several regions, and the regions into villages. The village heads, the regional chiefs and other politically

conscious ethnic minority hill people formed local civil society in 1970s, immediately after independence of Bangladesh. They organised the tribal people in the hills under the name of 'Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samity' (PCJSS), meaning- Chittagong Hill Tracts United People's Association, for protection of rights, ethnic entity and cultural heritage. When hundreds and thousands of Bengali Muslim people started settlement from the plains to the CHT, the PCJSS organised an underground militant armed forces referred as 'Shanti Bahini' (peace force). The Shanti Bahini carried on a guerrilla war in the hills to restrain Bengali settlement as well as realise autonomy and establish a separate administration for the CHT. After a long discussion they surrendered and signed up a bilateral peace agreement with the government in December, 1997. Following the peace agreement several thousand tribal refugees who took shelter in neighbouring Indian State of Tripura during the period of conflicts, came back to their houses. So, in this post-conflict situation it has become essential to initiate strategies to support the livelihoods for these refugees as well as internally displaced people and more specifically for poor ethnic women, the most vulnerable part of the hill community.

Majority of the hill people lives in remote areas. Some places are so remote hardly the outsiders can reach those places. They do not have adequate marketing facilities for their agricultural and other products and no western medical facilities even when their children get sick. Due to the inaccessibility NGOs are less interested to work in the hills. So, in support of the marginalised hill people government has initiated different projects and programmes with special emphasis on ethnic women in cooperation with various donor agencies. These programmes aim to help generate employment for the poor women and maintain accessibility for the hill people to local market or growth centres. But their effectiveness may be questioned.

The above backdrop reveals that the hill people in Bangladesh are under pressure on customary livelihoods and having lack of access to life opportunities. So this

research will address livelihood situations of ethnic minority hill people; and pressures and prospects for change, with special emphasis on ethnic minority women.

1.3 Justification and Relevance of the Study

The continuation of poverty and gender inequality is a big issue in rural Bangladesh, though arguably gender inequality is decreasing. Only two decades ago where only men were involved in and migrated for economic activities, one could hardly find any women group coming out of their household confinement and participating in any economic venture. But now, over three million poor women in rural Bangladesh are engaged in various economic enterprises, both individual and collective, with own funds or micro-credits from intervening NGOs (like Grameen Bank, BRAC), grassroots-based organisations or government institutions (like Bangladesh Rural Development Board, Directorate of Social Welfare). A growing number of NGOs in Bangladesh is providing collateral-free credit to the poor, particularly poor women to alleviate poverty, empower women, and ensure programme sustainability. But almost all these poverty alleviation programmes were limited in the plain districts. As major part of the hills was not accessible to the outsiders for almost two and a half decades due to insurgency problems and lack of communication facilities, no significant attempts were made by government or NGOs or development partners to deal with employment and poverty issues. Moreover, a large number of Bengali settlers from the plains aggravated the livelihood situations of the hill people by grabbing their cultivable lands, which migrated to the hill regions mainly during 1970s and 1980s. As safe movement is now possible in the hill tract regions after signing the peace accord, it is time to understand and examine the livelihood situations of the hill people and the pressures and prospects for change, with special emphasis on the ethnic women.

1.4 Objectives of the Research

The objective of this research is to understand the livelihood situations of ethnic minority women and the prevailing pressures on ethnic minority group living in the hills of Bangladesh and to explore their prospects for change. With this in view, the situations of ethnic minority groups as an international concern will be overviewed. In addition, the hindrances on improvement of ethnic hill women's lives will also be discussed.

1.5 Research Question

The specific question relating to the research is:

Why has it proved so difficult in the past to improve the livelihoods and well being of ethnic minority women in the hills of Bangladesh?

Following are the sub-questions of the research:

- a. Who are the ethnic minorities in the hill districts of Bangladesh and what are the gendered elements of their livelihoods?
- b. Who are the new settlers in the hills and how are they affecting ethnic women's livelihoods?
- c. What are the limitations of other agencies' activities in improving ethnic minority women's livelihoods and how the situations can be improved?

1.6 Methodology and Sources of Information

The aim of the research is to understand the livelihoods and well being of ethnic minority women living in the hill districts of Bangladesh and to assess pressures and prospects for change along with assessing the pressures on marginalised ethnic minority groups as an international concern. The aim is also to see who

the ethnic minorities in the hills of Bangladesh are, who the new settlers are and how these settlers affect the livelihoods of the hill people. So the paper will primarily be based on secondary data. The data are mainly available in the form of books, articles, policy documents, survey reports, study reports, various publications, reports by donors and NGOs, conference papers, newspapers and web sites/internet. This is an exploratory and analytical research.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

Although various data and information are available on the livelihoods of mainstream population, very few are actually available on ethnic minority groups due to strategic location of the habitats of ethnic minority hill people. Besides, monitoring and evaluation of the measures taken by government in favour of livelihoods of the poor women living in remote hills is another problem. This may jeopardize the outcome of the research.

Although much of secondary data from various sources are available for this study, many of them are from government sources. The nature of government source in any country is to provide basically the positive facts and information. In Bangladesh, even after the peace agreement signed between PCJSS and the government, the hill districts are not yet much accessible to the people due to the lack of adequate road and other mode of communications. Very few of private or non-government organisations or individuals use to pay visit to the hill districts. So non-government review or literatures on hill people are not much available. Though inter net materials are available, these are mostly biased against government programmes and activities.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

In the process of this research, along with other concepts, the following concepts will also be used to elaborate and analyse the research problem. The research is basically based on these concepts.

2.1 Politically Marginalised and Resistant Communities

Nothing is beyond politics in human society. Human being is divided into class, society, groups, sub-groups and communities everywhere. There is hardly any society where people are homogenous. Classes and divisions are originated from different historical facts and events, mostly from out of ill intentions and political desires of the ruling class. The rulers always control the situations and set social norms and values which act in their favour. Laws are also framed to protect the rights and privileges of the ruling class and the rich. In the prevailing social and economic system poorer and more marginalized people become more impoverished and vulnerable. Where the situation of the poor in the mainstream population is so, situation of ethnic minority groups are likely to be worse. In many cases they are deprived of their necessary amenities and even claims to fundamental rights. Indigenous people or ethnic minority groups are mainly dependent on land for their sources of livelihoods. Land is more indispensable to indigenous women, as their livelihood strategies are land based. In most countries, developing or developed, indigenous or ethnic minority people have become resistant communities struggling against being displaced from ancestral lands where women and children are the main victims and more marginalised.

Actually, marginalization is more political than an economic process. Indigenous people, especially indigenous women are less liberated and have borne the brunt of war, dislocation, forced migration and poverty. Globalisation has pushed women around the world into sex trade and exploited their cheap labour. Women

are the major part of unpaid labour force. Taking care of children, cooking and cleaning is their main business which shrinks their time for doing paid work. Any welfare reform and cuts to social services and workers' rights attack the most marginalised of the society who are already hit hardest by racist, sexist and anti-immigrant policies. War brings women death, displacement, rape and prostitution (Efting and Urrutia 2003).

2.2 Linguistic and Faith Communities

Shared language is vital for communication. Most people of the world are bilingual or multilingual. Only some people among various ethnic minority groups are monolingual. Scholars estimate that five to eight thousand different ethnic groups reside in approximately 160 nation states and there are over 5000 distinct languages spoken in those states. It is also estimated that only a few nations of the world are monolingual or mono-ethnic. And most of the world's nations have groups of individuals living within its territory who use other languages in addition to national language to function in their everyday lives (Valdes: <http://www.lsadc.org/fields/index.php?aaa=multiling.htm>, accessed on 18/10/2005). Many ethnic minority people, especially tribal people living in remote hills, are isolated from main stream population. Ethnic minority people who earn livelihoods only from forest or forest land hardly need to communicate with the outer world. These peoples are basically monolingual.

Faith-based community is a means of social cohesion. This sort of communities is very important in the construction of local as well as international network. But in true sense, humanity is a single race; and to make a global society unification of all existing races is essential. In reality, almost every nation state is comprised of more than one community. Faith, especially the religious faith is most powerful among all elements of building a community. Ethnic minority people act as a community when the members of a group hold similar belief. These people find themselves isolated from mainstream population. They always

struggle to protect their religious believes, customs, traditions and cultural heritage. They prefer to keep themselves away from majority population so that their social and religious cultures remain safe from the trend of the majority.

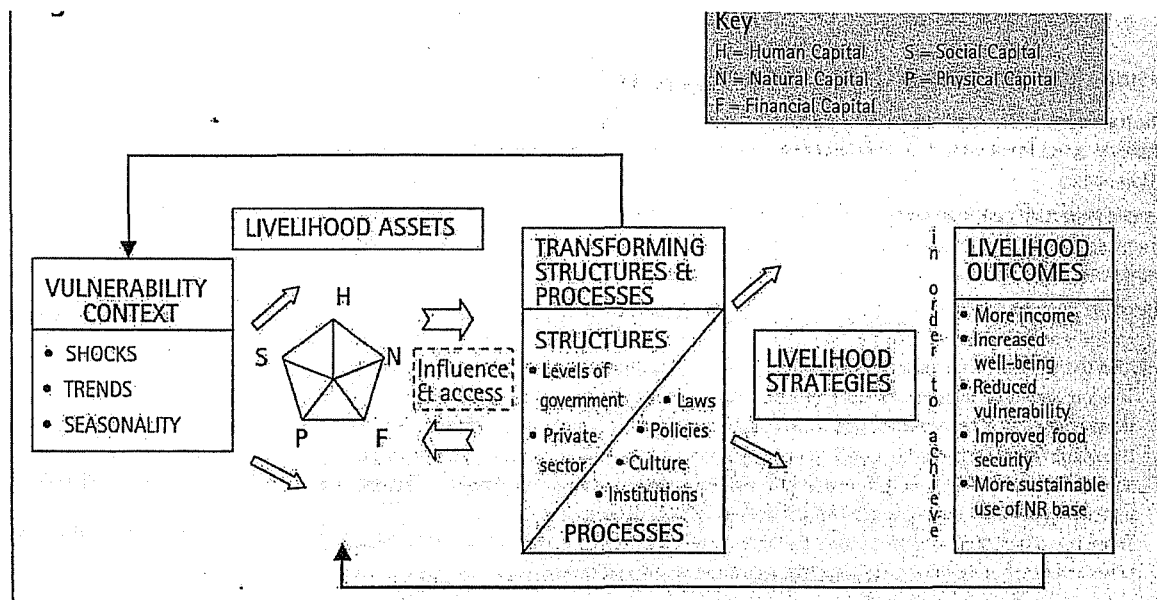
2.3 Livelihoods Framework and Gendered Roles

The harsh realities of poor people are that they tend to be easily lost in any sudden shocks/accidents. Seasonality affects them profoundly. Women, particularly poor women have less access to formal financial institutions like banks; and limited access to government supported programmes. They are not empowered through traditional institutions like community associations and tribal councils. So the British Department for International Development (DFID) identified the following livelihood assets essential to protect the poor from vulnerabilities and make their lives secured from sudden shocks (DFID http://www.removingunfreedoms.org/DFID_livelihoods.htm, accessed on 18/10/2005):

- Human (labour, health, education, other skills)
- Natural (land, rivers, urban agriculture)
- Financial (savings, access to credit)
- Physical (economic and social infrastructure, production equipment, housing, livestock)
- Social (information, social support mechanism)

In the following diagram on sustainable livelihoods framework adapted from DFID, the above five forms of capital are put into the assets pentagon. This reflects changes shifts between various assets occurring over time. A number of

Figure 1: Sustainable Livelihood Framework



Source: DFID 2000. Livelihoods Guidance Sheets

clear and constant relationships are there between shocks, trends, seasonality and different forms of capital. Besides, other influences are also present. These are laws, policies, culture and institutions. With strategic application of livelihoods framework shocks, trends and seasonality can be overcome and thus, more income, increased well-being, reduced vulnerability, improved food security and sustainable use of natural resources are possible. But these do not have similar implications for both genders. So in the study of livelihoods framework, analysis of gendered roles is important.

A gendered role is a set of behavioral patterns and norms associated with differences in expectations between socially identified men and women in a society. Gender is based on social behaviour, and it is unlike sex. Sex is simply a biological concept. Every society has its own gender/sex system in which

gendered divisions of labour exist. Worldwide almost every rural society has such differences, women may be involved with subsistence crops and men with cash crops; women's horticulture crops and men's cereal crops; women's goats and men's cattle (Kabeer1994: 271). Women often participate in cultivating subsistence crops along with activities that produce households and wider social relationships.

2.4 Shifting Cultivation and Gender

Shifting cultivation is a practice/system used mainly by locally mobile hill people where the cultivators choose a new piece of land for cultivation and leave the old ones; or keep it fallow for several years to regain its fertility. Shifting cultivation is commonly known as 'jum' cultivation in Bangladesh. The practice of shifting cultivation was considered efficient during those days when population was sparse and pressure of land was negligible. With increased population pressure, the jumming cycle, that is the fallow period has gradually been decreasing. In a densely populated country people cannot afford shifting cultivation system. Shifting/jum cultivation with short fallows damages the protective and productive capacity of land and can result in soil erosion and environmental damage.

Shifting cultivation activities are largely undertaken by women, because preparation of land for shifting/jum cultivation does not require ploughing of land. It is socially accepted as women's activity. Major part of harvesting is also done by women. In Bangladesh's hill societies men are often involved with fishing, hunting, cutting and selling of wood; and women do jum cultivation. When these hill people shift from one hill to another they prefer to continue the same gendered roles and practices in this shifting cultivation system. Women's time and energy are always under pressure. They have little time and energy to use for improving well-being.

2.5 Intra-Household Bargaining with Both Cooperation and Conflict between Genders

Household is an important unit of analysis. There are three different views or conceptual approaches to households for analysis of poverty and formulation of poverty eradication policies (Beneria and Bisnath 1996). According to orthodox neo-classical approach the household is an implicitly harmonious unit where decisions are taken harmoniously by household members as if they were a single, rational person without any apparent tensions. Decisions may be on anything like division of labour, labour market participation, education for children and consumption by different household members. Decisions are often seen as taken by the household head, assumed to be a man, not only tries to maximize the household utility; but also "helps families insure their members against disasters and other consequences of uncertainty" (Becker 1981: 176). So, this model indicates that there is no need to separately address the poverty of women, as it is automatically addressed by the responsible household head.

The second approach sees household as a place of tension and struggle where unequal power relations between women and men exist. This view denies family as a harmonious unit, rather it considers family "as a location of production and redistribution" (Hartmann 1987: 111). Although this view does not deny the emotional ties exist among the members of a family, it emphasizes "the nature of work people do in the family and their control over the products of their labour" (Ibid.). So, if we consider this view, gender-based resource distribution and division of labour within the household must be taken into consideration for poverty eradication, as any interventions will affect and be affected by gender relations in the households. For instance, women tend to use a higher proportion of their income on children's education and to meet up household expenses (Beneria and Roldan 1987). So, if any poverty eradication measures are taken with special emphasis to women, it has more fruitful effects

on household's well-being. But this approach tends to be pessimistic about challenging intra-household power structures working against women.

The third and final view, which can be considered as an intermediate approach, refers to household as the place of both tension and cooperation in a bargaining relationship. According to this approach family is a contradictory institution (Beneria and Bisnath 1996) through which micro level resource distribution, power and affective relations are played out. Household bargaining model of Amartya Sen (1990a) typifies this model. This model characterizes the household relations and emphasizes 'cooperative conflicts'. "In this framework, the process of bargaining depends upon a series of characteristics that define the relative strengths and/or weaknesses of different household members. Within this approach appropriately targeted actions can be taken to improve women's bargaining position. Hence, it is useful in terms of providing guidelines for gender-sensitive poverty eradication measures, such as those geared to increasing women's self-esteem and autonomy, improving their health, decreasing their work load, and ensuring their greater access and control over resources" (Beneria and Bisnath 1996).

2.6 Migration–Histories of Settlement and Gender Implications of Movements

Migration denotes conscious movement seeking improvement. Human migration denotes individual, group or family movement of people from one locality to another for new settlement. Human beings have been known to make migration journeys over the course of prehistoric to modern times. The various regions of the world have been inhabited by large scale migration of people since insertion of human life on Earth. The past histories of mankind are the histories of migration and settlement. Many regions/countries of the world (e.g. US, Canada, Australia) were either inhabited in the past only by

few native and indigenous people; or not inhabited at all. The migrants/new settlers helped them to become very powerful and technologically revolutionised countries.

Human beings are still on movement for settlement from one place to another; and this process might well continue for as long as there are humans. Almost all migrations of people or movement for settlement are eventually accompanied by family members of the same ethnicity. Younger men tend to move first mainly because of economic conflict - feminised societies are left. They are more physically vulnerable to outsiders; also often men, but also with more power.

2.7 A Summary of Concepts/Models Used in This Research

The minority people in the hills of Bangladesh are members of marginalised ethnic groups where the positions of ethnic women are more vulnerable in many dimensions. This vulnerability and marginalisation is partly economic and partly political. The ethnic minorities are resistant communities struggling against being displaced by Bengali settlers. The concepts/models described above have been used throughout this research wherever it deemed necessary. These are used to analyse the questions of the research in the following manner:

- Indigeneity – violence from security forces; general pressure on land; pressure on culture, language, faith.
- Gender – pressure on time and energy; power in household; violence from multiple dimensions.
- Livelihoods – limited source of earnings; continuous struggles; double burden on women.
- Jum – shifting cultivation; inefficient use of land;
- Migration and Settlement – land grabbing; unresolved conflicts.
- Discrimination – traditional inheritance laws; economic and social dimensions.

Chapter 3: Pressures on Marginalised Ethnic Groups as an International Concern

3.1 Introduction

Indigenous people are usually considered as marginalised ethnic groups who live under pressure either from parts of government or from elements in the mainstream population or from both. No universal definition of indigenous people exists. But the working definition used by the United Nations Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities has been accepted by many indigenous people. According to this definition, “indigenous communities, peoples and nations, are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems” (WCC 1998).

Indigenous people or minority ethnic groups worldwide generally do not wish for integration with wider society. Their culture, traditions and aspirations are neglected; rights are denied. They draw attention of the governments, states and civil societies to their problems and issues. They seek self-determination and autonomy, recognition of rights to lands and resources, right to practice own culture without any restrictions or impositions, religious freedom to develop their spiritual life, solidarity in the struggle against colonisation, assimilation and integration which facilitate their cultural genocide, support in the processes of decolonisation and recognition of human rights (Ibid).

Indigenous people are very much dependent on land for their livelihoods. So the right to possession of land is the most important of all issues of indigenous people. Land is the basis of their life patterns and practices, traditions and cultures. So the struggle for their existence is also land centred. But non-recognition of land rights of indigenous people has been a very common phenomenon in almost every part of the world where indigenous people are. Wherever indigenous people are-India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, China, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, New Zealand, Australia, Brazil, Mexico, Canada, Africa or the Arctic territories – the common unifying factor and characteristic of indigenous peoples is their unique relationship with wider physical environment. Irrespective of socio-politico-cultural beliefs, they all consider land as their basis of existence or the basic source of livelihoods. Indigenous women are more dependent on land than their male counterpart, as the males can sometimes manage alternative source of livelihoods like fishing, hunting, cutting and selling of wood. These are considered more difficult occupations for women. A large number of indigenous people are in desperate poverty with no access or little access to services offered by the states they live. They are the people having historic rights to land which are now in the possession of the dominant group (Ibid).

There is an estimate that the total number of indigenous people around the world is about 300 million and they are spread in more than 70 countries. “Among them are the Indians of the Americas, the Inuit and Aleutians of the circumpolar region, the Saami of northern Europe, the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders of Australia and the Maori of New Zealand. More than 60 per cent of Bolivia's population is indigenous, and indigenous peoples make up roughly half the populations of Guatemala and Peru. China and India together have more than 150 million indigenous and tribal people. About 10 million indigenous people live in Myanmar” (UNO 1992).

Indigenous or ethnic minority people, more or less in every part of the world, have been facing erosion of their own traditions and cultures, in addition to the dispossession of landholdings. They can be considered as the most disadvantaged groups of population on Earth. They face discrimination in language, religion, health, housing and education. They are forced to economic exploitation and abuse. They always face disruption of their livelihoods and life practices, and forced displacement from their traditional territories. "It is no exaggeration to say that some indigenous peoples live under the threat of extinction" (Ibid). The following discussions on indigenous people or minority ethnic groups under pressure selected from different regions of the world will give us a bit insight of their positions. Besides, these discussions will help us understand and compare the gender positions and livelihood situations of ethnic minority people in the hills of Bangladesh.

3.2 The Maori of New Zealand

It is estimated by some writers that the Maoris arrived in New Zealand possibly around 800 AD or even earlier; and they originally migrated from the Cook Islands. But they were sailing here and there in those days; and by the end of fourteenth century they settled throughout New Zealand with more concentration in the northern region (<http://www.newzealandnz.co.nz/maori/>, accessed on 01/10/2005). Others describe, "The ancestors of the Maori were a Polynesian people originating from south-east Asia. Some historians trace the early Polynesian settlers of New Zealand as migrating from today's China, making the long voyage travelling via Taiwan, through the South Pacific and on to Aotearoa (New Zealand)" (<http://history-nz.org/maori.html>, accessed on 01/10/2005). According to 1991 census, the total population of New Zealand was 3.74 million and the percentage of Maori was 14.7%.

The social structures of Maoris are based around family, sub-clan and clan. The various clans occupy different regions throughout the country. The Maoris are now seeking positions of power along with mainstream population in New Zealand. There are a number of prominent Maori politicians, entrepreneurs, scientists and athletes throughout the country. In recent decades Maoris have embraced a drive to avoid losing their culture and values and assert further acceptance of their language and culture in mainstream New Zealand (FAO: 2005). Though the Maoris are with the main stream population, yet they are felt different in their own country. They face several complex issues in the country. Pakeha (the European origin) look at and judge them on the street with a comment that the Maori want everything. So the young Maori generation is mentally ready to fight against mainstream population for their rights (OHCHR: 2005).

The policy of New Zealand government towards Maori is not clear. There is ambiguity about the total number of Maori population. According to New Zealand Planning Council, the percentage of Maori in New Zealand is only 8.9% and there is a declining trend in this number. While Edward Douglas, a demographer from University of Waikato, calculates that the Maori population is 23% of the total population of New Zealand and the figure is increasing. Douglas has calculated that in next generation 30% of the total population of New Zealand will be Maori (Jones and Hunter 2003). Yet the Maoris are psychologically alienated. They feel alienation of identity and have been losing the ancestral lands. The reason of ambiguousness of the number of Maoris lies in the definition process of Maori. "A concurring view is expressed in the Maori Affairs Act, the Treaty of Waitangi Act, the Electoral Act and many other statutes - any person who is descended from a Maori has the right to choose whether they will be regarded as Maori or not" (Ibid).

Although the government of New Zealand has been committed to provide education to the Maoris, they are in disadvantageous position as the administration, structure; delivery and content of education are not culturally

adaptive to them. They are under pressure of national education system. So the Maoris have been demanding educational opportunities relevant to their language and cultural identities that fit the needs of their children and future generation. Still the issue remains to be resolved. The livelihoods of Maori women are not diversified. One third of the total workforce in commercial fishing of the Maoris is women. So, they are now capitalising on carefully nurtured resource and gaining livelihoods through eco-tourism. (<http://www.galdu.org/english/index.php?odas=586>, accessed on 16/09/2005).

From this case study it is learnt that the government is virtually less interested to serve the purpose of ethnic minority people. The number of ethnic minorities is underestimated intentionally. Content of education does not satisfy the needs of minority people. Education delivery system is also not adaptive to them. Constant tension exists among the ethnic minority people about losing their cultural identity and traditions.

3.3 The Zapatista of Mexico

The indigenous people in Chiapas, a southern state of Mexico are referred to as 'Zapatistas'. They were originally known as 'Mayan'. The Mayans and their descendants have inhabited Chiapas for more than 500 years. They named themselves 'Zapatista' after Emiliano Zapata led a revolution in Mexico in 1910, who briefly took over Mexico City in 1914 with an army of peasants. He was assassinated five years later. These people had been enjoying self-sustaining lives until twentieth century. But today they are experiencing outside interventions in their livelihood practices, especially from Mexican government. The Mexican army always keeps an eye to their day to day activities and use to harass them in various manners. Their lands have been confiscated and rights have been snatched by Mexican government. As these indigenous people had been enjoying these rights since Mayan civilization flourished before arrival of the Spanish, they are now fighting against the government to revive all of their

rights including rights to land. Actually, like all other indigenous people around the world Zapatistas are also dependent on land for their earnings as a major source of livelihoods. (<http://www.umass.edu/writprog/willing3/desantis.htm>, accessed on 02/10/2005).

The Zapatistas were in a movement for autonomy from the Mexican government so that they could manage their livelihoods and enjoy more free lives. They were also claiming for their distinct cultural identity. The Zapatista rebels lived in the mountains of Chiapas and the ordinary Mayans live in Chiapas villages. Due to civil war and pressures from Zapatistas as well as from international community the Mexican government, in 1996, signed a treaty giving autonomy to the Zapatistas. But the terms and conditions of the treaty are yet to be implemented. In 1997 there were many murders, kidnappings, detentions, tortures, and beatings in the civilian communities of the Zapatistas. On December in the same year a paramilitary group raided a Zapatista town and killed 45 unarmed people. Twenty one of the victims were women, fifteen were children and nine were men. The massacre was carried out by the troops who had been recruited from that particular area. The army compelled indigenous people to leave the area and settle somewhere else. The conditions are not good even today. The indigenous people always live in fear. People are afraid to go out to farm and fields to earn the livelihoods. "The men are afraid of being shot and the women are afraid of being raped by the army. The presence of the military is now greater than ever. Low flying helicopters fly over the communities several times a day. There are military checkpoints along the road where every passing vehicle must stop. The military does these things saying that they are searching for drugs and guns, but that is simply not true" (Ibid).

From this case study we get the lesson that indigenous or ethnic minority people have to struggle to realise their claims and fight for cultural identity. But the government takes the strategy of repression. Government even does not implement the treaty signed under the pressure from international community as well as ethnic minority groups.

3.4 The Hill People of Vietnam

Indigenous people in Vietnam are usually referred as Montagnards. Out of 73 millions of Vietnamese population about 6-7 millions are indigenous. They are divided into 54 ethnic groups who are again divided into dozens of subgroups. So, Vietnam can be considered as one of the richest ethno-culturist countries in South East Asia. Some ethnic minority groups in Vietnam are having only a few hundred members, while some groups have upwards 500,000 members. The majority of indigenous people live in hill regions of the north, in central highlands and down the Thuong Son mountain range. Some indigenous groups are spread over international boundaries crossing the Indo-Chinese peninsula and Southern China (<http://www.vwam.com/vets/tribes/ethnicminorities.html>, accessed on 02/10/2005). The origins of Vietnamese indigenous hill people are not much known to us. It is thought that some indigenous groups already inhabited the area before four to five thousand years or more and some only few centuries ago. The colonial French government called them 'montagnards' which means highlanders or mountain people. Still this term is used when speaking in French or English. Generally the Vietnamese refer them as 'moi' means 'savages'. But the present Vietnamese government prefers to use the term 'national minorities'. The individual ethnic groups mostly share basic similar traits in their daily lives. But they can easily be identified by their distinct physical features, differences in languages and traditional dress (Ibid).

Similar to other indigenous people in different countries, Vietnamese indigenous people are also not at peace. Due to the violation of their rights to own and losing control over their lands and resources, they sometimes stage peaceful demonstrations. But the government use to respond brutally. So, the indigenous people sometimes hide them in forests and mountains or flee to Cambodia (Lang 2004). These people usually live in rural areas with few exceptions of educated family. Livelihoods of rural people are basically agriculture based. They

cultivate dry rice using slash-and-burn method (similar to 'jum' in the CHT). This method contributes to deterioration of environment by shorter the fallow periods. So the government has been trying to help them adapt wet land cultivation at lower altitudes for production of wet rice and cash crops like tea, coffee and cinnamon (<http://www.vwam.com/vets/tribes/ethnicminorities.html>, accessed on 02/10/2005). Some indigenous people are now being assimilated with mainstream population through education. But the quality of education is not up to the mark. It neither raises their skills, nor helps them gaining others. Yet, this process is slower among indigenous women than men.

Lessons from this case study are that the indigenous people have been losing their ancestral lands. Government responds brutally even to peaceful demonstrations of indigenous people. Very few of them are having opportunities for education. Quality of education is low which fails to develop their skills and assimilates them to the wider society.

3.5 The Maasai of Sub-Saharan Africa

Maasai, the indigenous people of parts of sub-Saharan Africa have lived in the southern Kenya and northern Tanzania for thousand of years. They are divided into sixteen different sections. Their number is around 400,000 (Jensen 2001). The majority of the Maasai live in Kenya and the rest in Tanzania. The Maasai people believe that their governments often underestimate their numbers. They are famous as herders and warriors. Once they dominated the plains of East Africa. But they are now confined to a fraction of their former land.

Most of what used to be Maasai land in the past has been taken over by the governments since the colonial time. Lands were taken for wildlife parks, Eco-parks, private farms and reserve forests. Only the least fertile driest lands are now in their possessions. Livestock, especially the cattle are central to Maasai economy. Their traditional grazing lands span from central Kenya into central

Tanzania. But they rarely have more animals. Various development efforts taken by the governments lose their access to land. They always have been demanding grazing rights in many of the national parks in both the countries as they have to move their cattle herds with the changing of seasons. But this demand is yet to be met by the governments of Kenya and Tanzania. The Maasais also earn their livelihoods by selling homemade beadwork to the tourists.

The Maasai women are very hard working. Adoption of agricultural production shifts the burden of work to women. Although Maasai women contribute a lot to agricultural production, they do not control agricultural produce and the income it fetches. Agriculture reduces the diversity of wild foods by killing off weeds including very wild foods and medicinal plants that are important to the Maasai. Thus, maize cultivation and loss of wild plants deprive them of components of their livelihoods. This is especially detrimental for the most vulnerable Maasai women.

From this case study we come to know that the Maasais are nomadic people. Their lives are highly vulnerable and settlement creates its own problem. Rearing of livestock is their main occupation. They also need agricultural land for crop cultivation. But the governments of Kenya and Tanzania are confiscating their lands for various projects. This deteriorates the livelihood situations of Maasai people where women, as a vulnerable group, are more affected than men.

Although the above case studies are taken from separate geographic regions of the globe, similarities are there among the fates of indigenous/ethnic minority people globally in terms of some specific issues. Among them, livelihoods and gender issues are more relevant with this research.

In New Zealand, though government seems more sincere these days to the rights and privileges of indigenous people, much of their ancestral lands were taken

away before for the European settlers. Indigenous people there are suffering from identity crisis. In Mexico, livelihood practices are being intervened by government through repression with the help of army. In Vietnam, indigenous people are losing their ancestral lands and experiencing brutality from the army. The indigenous people in Sub-Saharan Africa are also losing their ancestral lands; and the grazing rights – the most important components of their livelihoods are also being denied. Thus, the indigenous people everywhere are under tremendous pressure on livelihoods. Their claims on land rights do not get proper attention to their respective governments. Rather, lands are confiscated for implementation of various projects; or simply taken away under the Department of Forestry. Situation of ethnic minority people in Bangladesh is worse than any of the above cases, especially in terms of losing the possession of lands by the ethnic minorities as well as gender perspective. These will come up in the following chapters.

Chapter 4: Marginalised Ethnic Groups in the Hills of Bangladesh

4.1 Introduction

Various ethnic groups have entered the hill districts of Bangladesh over a period of centuries. These people have traditionally practiced swidden/shifting cultivation. Swidden/shifting pattern of cultivation is a system where a piece of land is cultivated for 2-3 years and has to keep fallow for 5-10 years to regain its fertility. Meanwhile the tribal family chooses and prepares a separate piece of land for cultivation. This pattern of cultivation is widely known as 'jum', which is the basis of their livelihoods and culture. This special kind of cultivation identified them as 'jumma' people. Although each tribal group is different from each other in terms of language, culture and economy; jum cultivation is widely common among all these ethnic minority/tribal groups.

Though referred as 'jumma' people from jum cultivation, the tribal or ethnic minority people of the hill districts of Bangladesh claim themselves as 'indigenous people', the most common term nationally and internationally to describe the tribes. They had also been referred such during the British regime. Even the Government of Bangladesh, in 1971, signed the ILO Convention 107 on indigenous people. According to the ILO, "Indigenous people should be regarded as those with a social or cultural identity distinct from the dominant or mainstream society, which makes them vulnerable to being disadvantaged in the processes of development" (2000: 7). Both ethnic minority people and Bengali settlers in the hill districts are vulnerable with regard to socio-economic condition. But ethnic minority people are more vulnerable in respect to the loss of access to their ancestral lands and natural resources, indigenous knowledge and social culture and institutions which may lead them to marginalisation, disintegration, conflict and disappearance as a distinct group. This will be discussed in details in chapter 5. However, following are the various ethnic

minority groups with gender dimensions, living in the hill districts of Bangladesh, that is, in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT):

4.2 Chakma

Chakma is perhaps the most adaptive ethnic minority people in the CHT. They are the biggest tribal group there, numbering about 240,000 people according to the census of 1991. But the Chakma people believe that their number is actually far higher than is recorded in the official gazette. They live both in remote areas as well as in towns and valleys. Chakmas are of Burmese origin and they are Buddhists. Their language is based with traces of Bengali, Arakanese, Pali and Assamese. They have their own script having similarities with Mon Khmer and Burmese. Chakmas came from Burmese Arakan to the greater Chittagong area in 1418, after being defeated in a battle with the Arakanese. The ruler of Chittagong gave them shelter and consequently in the following centuries they had been spread throughout the CHT. Chakmas have always been more integrated in Bengali society and their language is more close to Bengali than the languages of all other ethnic groups. So they have the highest literacy rate of all the ethnic minority groups living in the CHT.

According to the Interim Report No. 7 of Asian Development Bank on Sociology and Indigenous People of Chittagong Hill Tracts Region Development Plan (ADB: 2000), Chakma women do not inherit any property from father if he has one or more son(s). In case of more than one son, all sons have equal rights. Only when there is no son, daughter(s) inherit.

4.3 Marma

Marma is the second largest ethnic minority group in the CHT. Their total number was about 143,000 according to the census of 1991. The term 'Marma' was officially recognised by the then East Pakistan in 1961. Before that they

were known as 'Mogh' to the people of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) which the Marmas never preferred. Marmas are Buddhists by religion like most of the Burmese people. Marmas were driven out of Arakan by Burmese invaders in 1783-84 and they had settled in the CHT by 1826. To help this ethnic minority people, as a means of their livelihoods, the British East India Company created a cotton farm for the Marma immigrants immediately after their settlement there. Traditionally Marma women do most of the jobs in households as well as in farms. Marma people do commercial cultivation of fruit and timber in addition to jum cultivation and valley agriculture with a view to diversify their sources of livelihoods. They do not prefer to sit in bazaars. They feel bazaar is not a good place; and business means a loss of dignity and prestige. Marmas, especially the Marma women, prefer teaching profession. Marma language possesses the Arakanese-Burmese dialect and uses Burmese characters in written form.

Several inheritance systems are found among the Marmas. In one system, out of 16 shares, 10 go to the sons and six to the daughters. In another system, out of three parts, two go to the sons and one to the daughters. In accordance with a third system the eldest son inherits one half, the youngest a quarter and the rest divide the last quarter. In case of two sons, the oldest gets five-eighths and the youngest three-eighths. The daughters do not inherit anything. It is the responsibility of the eldest son to look after the unmarried sisters. Only when there is no son, the daughter(s) inherit.

4.4 Tripura

In CHT the third largest ethnic minority group is Tripura. Their number was more than 60,000 during the 1991 census. They came from the Indian State of Tripura. Once they were very powerful in the region. In 1512, they captured Chittagong, but soon after the Arakanese and Portuguese drove them out. Later, they were overrun by the Mughals, and in 1816, they came under the East India Company. The Tripuras were mostly Hindus in the past. But many of them

accepted Christianity during the British regime with the help of the missionaries. Their language belongs to the Tibeto-Burmese family of language which is so different from Bengali that they face difficulties while studying at schools. They have now diversified occupations in place of jum cultivation.

Among Tripuras, in the past, if the eldest son separated himself from home during father's life, he had to forfeit inheritance claims and the properties descended to the younger son. But if the eldest son stayed with father, he inherited everything and the younger sons got no share of it. In some clans, sons inherited from father and daughters inherited from mother. But nowadays all these customs have changed and all sons inherit father's property equally. They also take responsibility for unmarried sisters equally.

4.5 Mro

The 1991 census figure said that the total number of Mro in the CHT was more than 22,000 at that time. They came to the CHT from Arakan in the 18th century, after a conflict with the Khumis there. Although most ethnic minorities in the CHT are from the Mongoloid race, Mros have less Mongoloid traces in them. In terms of religion 60% Mros are animist, 39% follow Buddhism and 1% follows Christianity. They speak in a Tibeto-Burmese family of language. They have village based social structure and the villages maintain a communal forest. They live mainly from jum cultivation, done on hill slopes. They mostly stay on hill tops. Mro is the most remote and isolated ethnic group. They are also the lowest formally schooled ethnic minority people. They are having the lowest levels of access to government services.

4.6 Tanchangya

Tanchangya is the fourth largest ethnic minority group in the CHT. Their population size was more than 19,000 as counted in the census of 1991. The

word 'Tanchangya' is believed to be meant hill swidden farmer. Yet, Tanchangyas were one of the first people in the CHT to take up also wet-rice cultivation. That is, they practice both valley agriculture and jum cultivation. In Arakan, Tanchangyas are known as 'Dainak', and in Arakanese, Dainak means warrior. When they migrated in the CHT first, they settled near the river Tain. It is said that from the word 'Tain' they became known as Tanchangya. By religion, Tanchangyas are Buddhists. The scripts of Tanchangya and Chakma are the same; and so they can understand each other, though their dialects are not the same.

Among the Tanchangya community all sons inherit father's property equally. Even the adopted son will inherit father's property, but not the daughters. Only when there is no son, daughter(s) inherit.

4.7 Bawm

The Bawm came to the CHT from Arakan when the Khumis there pushed them out. Their number was 6,429 during 1991 census. They were very ferocious people in the past and lived on hilltops. Their villages were then heavily guarded. But missionary activities during the British colonial time brought them under Christianity and they started leading more peaceful lives. They have been provided with a romanised script for their language. Their level of education is now above average in the CHT. Still many Bawms live on hilltops. They practice migratory jum. But during the period of insurgency many Bawm villages were brought under concentration camps by the Bangladesh army. So their existence became jeopardized. Now the situation there is normal. Many of the Bawms now live in lower areas and started fruit gardening. One Christian NGO has been helping them for education and horticulture activities.

4.8 Pankhua

Pankhua is one of the small tribal communities in the CHT. According to the 1991 census the total number of Pankhuas was 3,227. But they feel that their number has been dwindling from the CHT due to their migration to the neighbouring Mizoram State in India. They have support for the Mizo National Front of Mizoram. They feel the Government of Bangladesh has a discriminatory policy against them. Pankhuas have been converted to Baptist Christians since 1915. They have their own language which has been provided with Roman script as they had no books or texts in Pankhua. So, in practice, there is a decline in the use of their original language. Similar decline is also visible in their old tradition and customs. Their socio-economic condition has also been declining as they have been losing their rights to land.

In the past, inheritance customs among Pankhuas were that only the youngest son inherited father's property and nothing was inherited by daughters or other sons. But nowadays, this has changed and parts of property are given to other son(s) and even to daughter(s).

4.9 Khyang

The Khyang does not belong to a big ethnic group. They were counted as having only 1,950 people during the 1991 census. They believe that some 200 years ago their king came from Arakan to take shelter in the CHT when the Burmese conquered Arakan. The pregnant younger queen and some of his soldiers accompanied him. But when the war ended the king went back to Arakan leaving behind his pregnant wife and some soldiers. The Khyangs believe that they are the descendants of that queen and of those soldiers (Chowdhury 1983: 56). By religion 60% Khyangs are Buddhists and 40% are Christians. Most of them live in areas confiscated by the Department of Forestry. These people mostly live from jum cultivation. So their livelihood practices are hampered as they cannot use these lands in accordance with their convenience.

4.10 Chak

The Chak came from Arakan and they are considered to be a sub-group of Chakma (Lewin 1869: 65). According to the census of 1991 their number was 1,681. They are Buddhists. They have a separate language, also called Chak. It is written in Burmese. Most of the elderly people can write and understand Chak; but the younger generations have been learning Bengali. About 80% of Chak children go to government primary school. The socio-economic condition of these people has also been worsening by losing their access to land. Only 25% of them are now involved in jum cultivation. Most of them are day labourers working in uplands. They strongly need ownership of land, modern agricultural tools and equipment, and marketing facilities for the crops they produce.

According to the customary laws among Chaks only sons inherit father's property. Father can give a part of his property to daughter(s). But this is optional.

4.11 Khumi

According to 1991 census the total number of Khumi was 1,241 in the CHT. The Khumis came to the CHT from Arakan hills in 17th century. Khumis believe that they are the best human race. According to them 'kha' means man and 'mi' means best race (Sattar 1984: 336). On the other hand, according to Lewin, 'khe' means dog and 'mi' means race in the Arakanese language (1869: 88). That is, Khumis are the dog race as dog is a favourite food to them. Khumis build their houses on top of trees on the ridges of hills and their villages are surrounded by bamboo wall. About 70% Khumis are Buddhists and the rests are converted Christians through missionary activities. The Khumis mainly live from jum cultivation.

In cases of Khumis the younger son inherits the larger share of property, then the eldest son and then the rest. Daughters do not inherit any property.

4.12 Lushai

The Lushai ethnic minority group migrated to the CHT from Lushai hills, Mizoram, India in 19th century. Initially their numbers were more. But after the creation of Lushai district in Mizoram (India), their numbers have gradually been decreasing. Their total number was 1,369 in the year 1951 and 622 during 1991 census. Lushais strongly orient themselves to Mizoram and most of them in the CHT live near the Mizoram border, far away from administrative and education centres. The Lushais were extremely ferocious till the British conquest of the Lushai hills in 1892. They live at the top of hills and maintain security at the entrance to the village. When they were very notorious tribe they raided other inhabitants in the hills and hunted their heads. But due to the missionary activities during British time they were converted to Protestant Christians and started practicing more peaceful lives. Their language can be written in Latin script. They cultivate jum and grow oranges and other fruits in valleys.

Among the Lushai the customary inheritance law is that the youngest son inherits all property of father and looks after his parents during their old age. Daughter(s) and other son(s) do not inherit any property. They leave their parents after marriage.

The customary inheritance laws of Mro, Bawm and Khyang are not known. But the others described above are quite discriminatory against women which deprive those inheriting paternal properties. These obviously affect the livelihood struggles of ethnic minority women.

On the other hand, the Bengali Muslims follow the Islamic inheritance laws. According to Islamic laws each daughter inherits paternal property just half of each son. And maternal property is divided equally among daughters and sons. The married daughter also inherits property from husband. Besides, husband is responsible to provide all necessities for his wife. So the livelihood context of a Muslim woman is different. Here family is considered as a harmonious unit

where the household head (usually male) is responsible for livelihoods of the whole family and the spouse is responsible for doing the household chores. The reader can now judge and comment on inheritance laws of both the Bengalis as well as of ethnic minority groups living in the CHT.

Comparison of human development among various ethnic minority groups or between ethnic minorities and mainstream population is not possible due to the non-existence of a National or Regional Human Development Report for Bangladesh.

Chapter 5: The New Settlement and the Pressures on Ethnic Minority Women

5.1 The Hills and the Hill Peoples as Seen from the Rest of Bangladesh

Nearly half of the inhabitants in the hill districts of Bangladesh are ethnic minorities. They are less integrated with mainstream population. Their relations with the people in the plains generally depend on their ethnic background and patterns of economic activities. Due to the lack of interaction people of the plains cannot form any clear idea about cultures and characteristics of these ethnic people. Many people of the plains hold the perception that ethnic minority people are shy, sincere and honest. But many other think this is not true. According to them ethnic minority people do not trust and like the people of the plains. So they keep themselves isolated.

Since insertion in the CHT till signing the peace accord in 1997 ethnic minority people had been living there mainly on the basis of their indigenous knowledge. Their livelihoods were basically based on jum cultivation. Most parts of the hills and valleys were not accessible due to the absence of road communication. The areas were also not accessible from mid-1970s to 1997 due to the war between Shanti Bahini and the official forces of Bangladesh. Though a peace treaty had been signed, most of the points are yet to be implemented. Besides, some ethnic minority people do not accept the peace accord. Many people in the plains were also against some points of the treaty. So it is still very tough to plan and implement any development programmes for the CHT. But the general view throughout the country is to implement necessary development programmes and bring ethnic minority people into development process and ensure peace in the CHT.

The general perceptions among mainstream population are that the hill districts of Bangladesh are full of natural resources. Ethnic minority people are enjoying

these resources and claiming these are only theirs. As they have been living there for centuries, only they have the right to live there and the Bengali settlers are outsiders. The Bengalis, on the other hand, argue that the CHT is a part and parcel of the sovereign Bangladesh. The Constitution of Bangladesh says, any citizen of the Republic can possess land and settle anywhere in the country. As there is no restriction against ethnic minority hill people to possess land and settle anywhere in the country including the plains, they cannot oppose the Bengalis to settle in the CHT. If they do so, it will be a violation of the Constitutional Law. They also argue that Bangladesh is the most densely populated country in the world; and the CHT is many times less densely populated than the plains. So it is very natural for peoples from the plains to migrate to the CHT for settlement. This is their constitutional right.

The Bengalis also have objections against jum cultivation. They argue, this process of cultivation requires clean land and for why, ethnic people use slash and burn method. After 2-3 years of cultivation the land has to be abandoned for 5-10 years to regain its fertility. So, in these days of scarcity for cultivable land there is no scope to keep any land fallow for years together. Jum is the most inefficient way of cultivation in terms of land use. It causes land erosion more, compared with plough cultivation where plants are not burnt. During monsoon landslide is a common problem in the hills of Bangladesh. It is believed that this is an after effect of jum cultivation.

5.2 The Settlers and the Process of Settlement in the Hills

In 1947 when India and Pakistan became independent from the British rule almost 98% of the hill (CHT) populations were ethnic minority people (Acharya 2000). But today the percentage of ethnic minority people in the CHT has come down to about half of its total population. The other halves are Bengali Muslim populations who are referred to here as Bengali Settlers. These settlers are very poor land less people majority of which migrated to the CHT from Chittagong,

Noakhali, Comilla and Sylhet districts with the expectation of getting empty land in the hill slopes and valleys and free rations for support of their families. So far it is understood from discussions of different ethnic minorities in this paper different tribal group settled in the CHT during the last few centuries. Only during the mid-eighteenth century a few Bengali cultivators were settled there first to work on land for the local king and to teach lowland farming to Chakmas. At that time Bengali immigrants did not have the right to purchase land in the CHT (Chowdhury 2002).

When the British annexed the hills of Chittagong in 1860 they created an autonomous administrative district named Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). To protect customary laws, rights and socio-cultural identities of ethnic minority people and to save them from economic exploitation of the mainstream population, the British enacted the Regulation 1 of 1900 Act. The 1900 Act functioned as a safeguard for ethnic minority people prohibiting land ownership and migration by the people of the plains in the CHT throughout the British colonial period. But after partition of India the Government of Pakistan (Bangladesh was then a province of Pakistan) amended the 1900 Act. This amendment made way for the mainstream Bengali people from any district to migrate and settle in the CHT. After that different governments pushed ahead the settlement process against the social movements embodying resistance of ethnic minority people. This process gained momentum during Bangladesh time after 1970, more specifically during martial law governments. The settlers are very poor peasants or land less and some of them are day labourer, fishermen and small businessmen. Almost all of them are Bengali Muslims.

The period of inconvenience for ethnic minority people began since early sixties when the Pakistani government started building a hydroelectric dam at Kaptai under Rangamati district in the Chittagong Hill Tract region. This dam flooded 1,036 square kilometres of lands, submerged 40% of the best arable land of the district and displaced 100,000 tribal people from their ancestral lands

(<http://www.angelfire.com/ab/jumma/bgground.html>, accessed on 07/09/2005).

As the dam was built the then Pakistani government encouraged poor Bengali families to move into the hills and settle in the hill region. A steady stream of Bengali settlers moved into the hill districts during the rest of Pakistani regime in 1960s resulted in eviction of thousands of ethnic minority families from their homes. When Bangladesh liberated itself from Pakistan in 1971 the percentage of Bengali settlers became 10% in the CHT (Nyeu, 1991). As the number of settlers had increased, pressure on resources had also been increased. So the livelihood practices of ethnic minority people, more acutely those of women were threatened more than ever before.

During 1970s the number of migrated Bengalis to the hill districts increased gradually. The Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission Report (1991) exposed that after the liberation war of Bangladesh 50,000 Bengalis entered the Ramgarh area of the CHT. In two years period from 1979 to 1980 total 100,000 Bengali settlers moved into the CHT. Another 100,000 moved there during the next year, i.e. in 1981; and other 200,000 during 1982 and 1983. The revised estimate up to 1991 shows that the total number of ethnic minority hill people and Bengali settlers were respectively 501,144 (51.43%) and 473,301 (48.57%) in the CHT (Adnan 2004: 57). The process of Bengali settlement in the CHT eventually diminished after 1990 when democratic government was re-established in Bangladesh. And this has been stopped after signing the peace accord in 1997. Due to the unavailability of data on rate of fertility separately for the CHT, rate of natural increase in population in the CHT is not known.

As the marginalised peasants or land less poor Bengali men from the plain districts migrated to the hills for permanent settlement with the expectation of getting rations and some acres of land from the government for their own, they did not go there alone. Almost in all cases they migrated there along with their families. These people were ill fed and ill clad while they had been in their previous/original settlements. Their incomes were not adequate to run the

family. These people were vulnerable to any external shock. Even in their new settlement in the hills these people are the victims of circumstances. They were not accustomed to high land cultivation. They are now isolated from their kith and kin. Ethnic minority people always want them to go back. But they cannot go back as they did not leave anything in their previous settlements.

These settlers brought their religion and culture with them. They wear similar dress to the mainstream population. Especially women wear saree (a typical Bengali as well as Indian women's dress, about six metres long and without any stitch) and the girls wear either saree or salwar-kamis (trousers and loose shirts, especially made for women). Though Bengali settlers have migrated from different districts and their social customs were a bit different from each other depending on their origins, yet they live there as a single community for their common interest against hill people. So the Bengali settlers are now considered as the largest single community in the hill districts; while the hill people are divided into several ethnic groups. This panicked the ethnic minority people in the CHT. The language and culture of these ethnic groups are different from each other. Although the religion of majority of ethnic minority people is the same (Buddhism), practices are different. They celebrate different festivals and women wear dresses of different designs (please see the pictures on the next page).

Picture 2

Bengali Woman



Source:

http://banglapedia.search.com.bd/Images/D_0281A.JPG

Picture 3

Chakma Woman



Source:

http://banglapedia.search.com.bd/Images/C_0090A.JPG

Picture 4

Khumi Women



Source:

http://www.sdnxbd.org/sdi/international_da ys/Indigenous-people/2005/indigenous_people_bd/bangla_tribe11.html

5.3 The Lives and Struggle for Livelihoods of the Hill Women

Ethnic minority hill women have to share a subordinate position to men at home and in society. Clear divisions of labour are there between ethnic women and men. Workload of women is more than men. But decision-making capacity of women is less. They have to do all household work like cooking, cleaning, washing and childcare. They have to collect water from river or well, vegetable from garden, herbs and fruits from forest. They have to weave clothes at home and participate in jum cultivation. Besides, collection of firewood, rearing of goats and pigs, poultry farming, homestead gardening are also their responsibilities. They do not have any leisure time. They have to work hard from dawn to dusk. Yet they pass a miserable life in absolute poverty.

In the past women from most of the ethnic tribal groups, along with their families, used to live in remote hills either on hill slopes or on hilltops and few of them lived in valleys. But nowadays, majority of them lives in valleys or near bazaars. One of the main reasons for it is to send the children to school. Usually they prefer these days to live close to each other, because they are afraid of sudden attack from Bengali settlers. Still many women live in temporary houses along with family members for almost half of the year near jum fields, as jum cultivation provides bread and butter for majority of ethnic hill people.

It is easier to identify the ethnic minority women by dress from which tribal group they come. This is possible mainly from distinct design and the way of wearing clothes; called 'khadi' or 'pinon' weaved by their own hands. But this distinctiveness has been changing due to strong Bengali cultural influences from the plains. For obvious reasons these cultural changes have also slowly been changing the life style and livelihood patterns of hill women. Many ethnic minority hill women do not weave their clothes any more. Instead, they buy dresses from local as well as external markets, which resemble the dresses of Bengali women. Almost all ethnic minority women can now understand and speak Bengali language.

In the changing cultural atmosphere each ethnic minority group still has been trying in clans to protect their religion and own cultural heritage. They have been successful to protect themselves from being Muslims. But a large number of them have accepted Christianity from animist or Buddhism. This could happen due to efforts of the Christian Missionaries during the British regime. Even today Christian Missionaries are carrying out many benevolent social programmes like providing free schooling to children, safe drinking water and health services for ethnic minority people living in the hill districts.

As the ethnic minority hill people in Bangladesh have livelihoods centred on forest, degradation of forest has largely changed women's roles. As part of livelihoods they now have to render their labour to other activities which were non-traditional to them in the past. Many of them have to earn money by working as day labourer in reserve forests or in agricultural fields to support family consumption. In absence of any technological improvement in agriculture in the hills hill women have to do everything manually. This takes away much of their energy which has health and aging effects. In doing their jobs women usually do not get any help from their male counterpart. In spite of these they do not have control over cash, as marketing activities are done and controlled by men.

Not only these, due to illiteracy and language barriers, ethnic women are usually deprived of getting information, credits, inputs and materials from outside world for doing any commercial work. Formal educational status of ethnic minority women in the hill districts is very low. It is extremely low in rural areas. Usually schools are far from houses of most of the ethnic people. This is mainly because of lower density of population in the hill regions than the plains. Moreover, many people do not feel secure to send their children, especially the female children to schools. Instead, they take help from their girls in household chores. Dropout rates are higher among girls of the poor families in rural areas. Discriminatory traditional inheritance practices for assets, especially for land

properties are also responsible to weaken the livelihood situations of ethnic minority hill women (details are given in chapter 6).

The livelihood struggle of ethnic minority women had also been threatened for a long time during the period of conflicts in the CHT when Shanti Bahini, the armed wing of PCJSS (Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samity), the association of ethnic minority groups was in a guerrilla war against the official soldiers of Bangladesh. Ethnic minority groups demanded autonomy for them and wanted separate administration for the CHT. But the Government of Bangladesh refused their claim for autonomy. So during the time of war it was not unusual for ethnic minority women to be sexually harassed by few of perverted soldiers from neighbouring camps. When the ethnic people could not stand anymore, they left the place along with families. In many cases their lands had been taken over by Bengali settlers. Sometimes the Department of Forestry also confiscated their lands. In this process many ethnic minority families lost their lands and these phenomena affected the livelihoods status of ethnic minority women.

5.4 How are the Settlers Affecting the Livelihoods of Ethnic Hill People

Though there are no claims that ethnic minority people were very rich in the past since their first settlement in the hills of Bangladesh few centuries ago, they were not as unhappy in the past as they have been since nineteen sixties. The then Pakistani government instituted the settlement plan for the poor Bengali people in the CHT. And after independence the subsequent Bangladesh governments had also been convincing its illiterate land less peasants and poor people to migrate and settle in the hills till 1990. The argument of the government was that in the plains of Bangladesh density of population is extremely high. On the other hand, CHT is less densely populated. Besides, much of the lands in the CHT were seen as uncultivated and hence wasted. Thus

it was decided to help settlement of a number of people from the plains in the CHT to relieve the densely populated plains as well as help replacement of traditional jum cultivation by wet land cultivation like paddy, wheat and other cash crops. So, thousands of Bangladeshi settlers migrated to the CHT and settled there during the period from 1970s to 1990. Their aim was to change their fate with lands having from the government. They occupied the cultivable lands in the hills limiting ethnic minority people's opportunities for exploration of their livelihoods.

Ethnic minority hill people feel that they are poor as much of their best cultivable lands were taken by Kaptai hydroelectric dam, lake, and by Bengali settlers. They have been forced to change their pattern of livelihoods. Due to scarcity of land they are now compelled to work as day labourer. Some of them have been trying to adopt horticulture. Even before construction of the Kaptai dam and large-scale Bengali settlement, the available land was insufficient for a comparatively sparse population in the CHT. On the other hand, with its agrarian economy Bangladesh is substantially dependent on land. But per capita land was nationally only 0.29 acre (no separate statistics was found on socio-economic difference between the two groups including landownership) in 1992 (Mohsin 1997: 114), though even 0.5 acre cannot be seen as sufficient for subsistence production and is the absolute minimum level for existence (Jessen 1997: 59). This is really an immense problem for Bangladesh. In addition, regular floods make the situation more aggravated in the plains. In contrast, the CHT is regarded to as sparsely populated, as only 0.75% of the population of Bangladesh lives in 9.2% of the land (Siddique 1997: 1) and there are less chances of floods in the CHT regions.

But Roy (1995: 57) describes the results of a survey made by a Canadian company in 1964 in the CHT which showed that the condition of available land in the CHT was already very critical even before the dam construction in 1962. According to the results of the survey only 3.2% land in the CHT was graded as

class 'A' which was suitable for all purpose agriculture. Only 2.9% was graded as class 'B' which was suitable for terraced agriculture and partly for fruit gardening. Class 'C' was about 15.5% which was suitable partly for horticulture and partly for afforestation. Class 'C-D' accounted for only 1.4% which was suitable for afforestation and horticulture after terracing the slopes. And the rest 77% constituted class 'D' which was suitable only for afforestation. The survey results showed that the vast majority of the lands of the CHT could only be used for afforestation and not for cultivation. According to 1974 census, about 80,000 to 100,000 families in the CHT had to share 270,000 acres of suitable land which could be used for cultivation. That is, on an average, each family could cultivate only between 3.7 to 4.63 acres of land. These amounts of cultivable lands in the forest were not at all adequate for indigenous people to earn their livelihoods, because their income earning potentials were not diversified. Situations of ethnic minority people today are even far behind the above statistics, as most of the estimated cultivable lands are no longer under their possessions. These are now either under the possessions of the settlers or are declared as reserve forests by the Department of Forestry.

According to a government decision taken in 1980, "each land less settler family received five acres of hill land or four acres of mixed land or 2.5 acres of wet rice land. They also received two initial grants of Taka 700 altogether, followed by Taka 200 per month for five months and 24 lb. of wheat per week for six months" (<http://www.angelfire.com/ab/jumma/settlers.html>, accessed on 07/09/2005). To the contrary, thousands of ethnic minority families, dispossessed by Kaptai dam project, were still waiting to get compensation. Thus, under favourable circumstances, by 1981, the number of Bengali settlers had risen up to almost one-third of the total population in the CHT (<http://www.angelfire.com/ab/jumma/bground.html>, accessed on 07/09/2005). As the percentage of Bengali settlers had been gradually rising, they were occupying more and more cultivable lands having severe contraction of the income earning facilities of ethnic minority people. Ethnic women, earning

livelihoods only from agricultural activities, were being affected much due to the settlement process of Bengali people in the hill districts.

Land is the main source of livelihoods for ethnic minority people. But there had been a constant process of land grabbing by Bengali settlers in the CHT due to tremendous population pressure on the plains. When the settlers found that they could not make a living from the land they were given by the government they encroached on tribal people's lands. There were many ways how the settlers encroached on their lands. "Attacks on Jumma peoples' villages are the most common way to evict the inhabitants from their lands" (<http://www.angelfire.com/ab/jumma/settlers.html>, accessed on 07/09/2005). Besides, during the period of conflicts, "when people are in India, their land is usually taken over by Bengali settlers who coveted it before attack. Although the land is legally in the hands of the refugees, there are sometimes problems which exacerbate the difficulties of regaining land. The land documents are frequently destroyed when the houses are burnt which means that the only records of the deeds lie with the authorities. In some cases, the new Bengali settlers obtain false papers for the same land and it becomes difficult for the hill person to prove ownership" (Nyeu 1991). Reversely, ethnic minority people also carry on sudden attacks on Bengali settlers and set on fire to their houses to drive them away from the hills.

However, in the process of land grabbing by the settlers many ethnic minority families became land less during the period of insurgency. Many of them did not have any alternative but to take shelter in cluster villages. Cluster village is a village of small low-cost houses made and earmarked by the government for land less people under close supervision of government authorities. In cluster villages cultivable lands were very scarce that could not adequately support their livelihoods. So, many ethnic minority people including women had to work as day labourer. This constituted a great change in orientation of the economy of

ethnic minority people, as in the hill society of Bangladesh possession of land and cultivation determine the process of identity construction. Gradual dispossession of land by ethnic minority people had been affecting their identity. All these events changed the lifestyles and affected livelihoods of ethnic minority people in the CHT.

The settlers had been the cause of change of demography of the CHT in a time span from 1947 to 1990. In this time period the percentage of Bengali population rose up and that of the ethnic minority population fell down. "The development of the CHT demography shows that while in 1947 the Hill People constituted about 98% of the population, in 1956 already less, that is 91%. The Bengali population rose from 1961 with 12% to 40% in 1981 and as much as 50% in 1991. In Bandarban and Khagrachari districts the Bengalis account for the majority with 53% and 52%" (Mohsin 1997: 119).

With the pace of this demographic change in the CHT attack and counter-attack between Bengali settlers and ethnic minority people were common phenomena in the past. After all incidents ethnic males used to flee in deep forest or cross the Indian border to take shelter with a fear from further drastic attack or counter attack on the part of Bengali settlers or to avoid harassment from discipline forces. Sometimes they continued remaining absent from homes for many days. In these kinds of incidents ethnic women had to pass a terrible time along with their children at homes. They were more afraid of sexual harassment in those days by members of security forces or even by the settlers. Their income earning facilities had been squeezed in those days and they had to starve with their children for days together.

Chapter 6: Difficulties on the Way to Improvement of Ethnic Women's Lives

6.1 Introduction

High dependence on jum cultivation, low productivity in terms of land use and low purchasing power are common economic features of ethnic minority people's livelihoods in the hill districts of Bangladesh. Most of the villages of ethnic minority people are not reachable by development workers/outsideers due to the lack of transport infrastructure. So, diversified sources of livelihoods for hill people are not possible without improvement of physical infrastructure in the hill districts. Improved transport infrastructure in the hills may provide local access to farms, market places and socio-welfare institutions; and can bring basic amenities of life, introduce improved agriculture and create employment opportunities for ethnic minority people. These might enhance productivity and purchasing power, which in turn will improve quality of life. But violence, insecurity, crimes and income exploitation can also accompany improved transport infrastructure from the increased movement of outsiders in the hills on the other hand.

Physical infrastructures like roads; bridges and culverts are usually built in Bangladesh using labour intensive technologies under public works programmes. Food for Work is one of the examples of public works programme. Corruption may be there in implementation process, despite the stated intention of the government from these kinds of programmes being to maximize direct and indirect benefits like facilitation of transportation and income and employment generation. Also to focus on provision of basic economic and social services in collaboration with various local NGOs and the private sector is another motto of the government for these sorts of programmes. In the CHT regions Government efforts claim to be there to implement development work involving poor women with a view to support their livelihood strategies. Claiming to be for the benefits

of local women and in order to create community assets, infrastructure projects under public works programme are designed and implemented for the empowerment and economic welfare of ethnic minority women.

Road maintenance works in the hills might offer benefits to ethnic minority women. But due to some practical reasons women cannot always involve themselves in all maintenance sites. They can only work nearby homes. Where there is work in a different locality, they cannot move. But men can move anywhere for job. They can stay at night in any temporarily constructed shelters. But due to socio-cultural barriers and for physical risks, women cannot stay outside their own houses without adequate precautionary measures. So scope for employment in maintenance work is not always open for ethnic minority women.

6.2 Pressure on Livelihoods

The ethnic minority hill women in Bangladesh are the most vulnerable part of society. They are always under tremendous pressure on livelihoods. Their livelihoods are basically 'jum' based. Jum is a labour intensive method of cultivation. It requires new plots for further cultivation and old plots are to be kept fallow for several years to revive its fertility. But due to population pressure, mainly from new settlers, new plots are not available these days for jum cultivation. So, ethnic women have to cultivate the same plot of land years after years, which further deteriorates the productivity.

To protect ethnic hill women from vulnerability DFID livelihoods framework may be useful. Under this framework there should have attempts to achieve livelihood assets identified by DFID. But achieving these assets or identifying alternative sources of livelihoods for improvement of the lives of ethnic women

is a very difficult task. The main reasons behind these difficulties are described in the following sections.

6.3 Lack of Trust of Government

Even after the peace accord, ethnic minority people are still skeptical about the activities of the government and so-called development activities in the CHT carried out by various government agencies. "The post-accord period in the CHT has proven to be equally as violent and dangerous as the pre-accord period. The main demands of the Jummas - constitutional recognition of the Jumma peoples; demilitarisation of the CHT; and rehabilitation of the government sponsored Bengali transmigrants to areas outside the CHT - has not been met, and the situation remains as chaotic as ever" (Chakma: <http://action.web.ca/home/sap/attach/chakma1.rtf>, accessed on 27/08/2005). In addition to it, ethnic minority women cannot forget those days of abduction and sexual harassment they encountered from some perverted members of security forces during war period. Though these kinds of offences were not uncommon in those days both at individual as well as group levels, these seldom happen after the peace accord. However, the past incidences help them distrust all members of security forces as well as other government agencies. These sorts of feelings of ethnic minority people, and more importantly of ethnic women, keep them away from rendering spontaneous support necessary in implementation of projects run by different government agencies in the hills of Bangladesh.

6.4 Presence of Security Forces

Due to strategic reasons, members of security forces have not yet been fully withdrawn by the government from the CHT even after eight years since signing the peace accord. Still government has to execute its development activities under prior and proper security measures. Because, although a peace treaty has been signed, it does not mean the conflicting situations are fully over from the

CHT, and dissatisfactions from minds of people from all groups have been disappeared. Even differences in opinions are there among various ethnic groups. As some of the ethnic women have fearful previous experiences with some immoral security personnel, ethnic women still hesitate to work in development projects in presence of security forces. Presence of security forces also restricts movement of ethnic minority women in the hill districts. Because, “women live in continuous fear of rape. Women who have been raped may be rejected by their husbands or their families, or may not be able to get married. If they become pregnant they have to conceal this fact and must try to have an abortion. If a child is born it is impossible for the woman to stay in her community as the situation is not accepted and she is ostracized” (<http://www.angelfire.com/ab/jumma/rape.html>, accessed on 27/08/2005). Under this situation, reluctance is there among ethnic minority women to work outside for paid employment in development projects. If they can manage alternative way of livelihoods nearby homes, they give priority to that.

6.5 Burden of Unpaid Household Chore and Low Income from Paid Work

Women of all ethnic minority groups in the hill districts are overburdened by household works as well as by agricultural activities. They have to do almost all reproductive works and household chores like childcare, cooking, cleaning, poultry and goat rearing, collection of fire wood, water fetching and weaving. Most of them cannot spare time for any paid employment due to over burden with unpaid works. So the employment generation programmes through road construction and road maintenance by the government do not carry much meaning to them. These sorts of programmes can only employ a few widows, divorced, unmarried, and destitute women from those families who do not possess any cultivable land. Besides, these programmes are designed with a view to provide only subsistence level of income that is, the wage rate is so low that does not bring about any change in their economic status. So they do not feel

encouraged for saving time from their burdened day to day unpaid routine jobs for these sorts of paid employment.

6.6 Lack of Formal Ownership of Land

Although ethnic minority people have been living in the CHT for centuries and using surrounding lands in their locality, they do not have any official document in favour of their ownership on those lands. They claim the ownership only by virtue of de facto possession on the land. It was natural in the past for every jumma family to shift once again from their original place of settlement to possess new fertile lands required for jum cultivation. As the hill districts are gradually becoming crowded every year due to natural birth, later and more importantly due to new Bengali settlers from outside districts, the shifting trend among jumma people has almost ceased. Nowadays they are also trying to move away from inefficient traditional shifting cultivation to productive and permanent wet land and plough cultivation system. So the formal ownership of land is now a burning issue to ethnic minority people. In absence of any formal document in favour of the land, there is no guarantee for them to continue to live in their own houses. Bengali settlers sometimes become capable to manage a false document in favour of ownership of a land and compel its actual possessor to quit. This indicates how vulnerable the ethnic minority people are in their century-long settlement in the hills. These sorts of sudden displacement severely affect the livelihoods of ethnic minority people; and women and children as the more vulnerable parts of the tribal society, are the major victims of this kind of forced displacement. Absence of ownership on land and other family properties puts them in trouble, makes them impoverished and vulnerable, leads them to deprivation and creates such a situation where it is really difficult to improve their lives either by own or by government or by any external donor agencies.

6.7 Multifarious Social Discriminations

Disparities are most common between the mainstream population and the ethnic minorities in any country of the world having ethnic minority groups. Similarly, disparities are there between ethnic minority men and women. So the discriminations against ethnic minority women are of two folds. In a poor country like Bangladesh where almost half of the population lives under the poverty line, situations of ethnic minority people are more miserable. So, ethnic minority women are believed to be the poorest among the poor, and lack of access to land is the major reason of their poverty. Many of them today are becoming increasingly reliant on agricultural paid labour for their livelihoods. Here also they face discrimination twice in terms of getting their wage. First, ethnic minority people get far less than their counterparts of the dominant Bengali society; and second, ethnic minority women get far less than their male counterparts. But it is very difficult to measure their extent of poverty as ethnic minority people live partly outside the cash economy.

Not only these, there are many other reasons responsible to limit the fruitful results from development projects undertaken for the development of the lives of hill women in the CHT. To improve the livelihoods of ethnic minority women, management over traditional resources and land security should be given top priority. For this, there is no alternative but the provision for personal land ownership to ethnic minority people, and more importantly to ethnic minority women. Ethnic minority women are usually considered as custodian of the traditional ecological knowledge and practices. They are not ready to accept any such projects and programmes which they do not think suitable to protect their traditional practices. But government as well as donor agencies often ignore this fact. Moreover, ethnic minority women prefer to be involved at different stages of development projects in their locality, and as per their traditional habits. But hardly have they got this opportunity.

Public education provided to ethnic minority children is unsuitable for ethnic minority people. It is not culturally sensitive to their specific needs. No differentiated curricula for ethnic minority children are provided, though the language, history, culture, spirituality, hopes and aspirations of ethnic minority people are different. The same uniform language (Bengali) and curricula are followed throughout the country. Ethnic minority children face difficulties in learning through an alien (Bengali) language. So it is believed that dropout rates are more among the children of ethnic minority people. It is highest among the female children who consequently become part of the vulnerable women groups. But supply of data in support of this belief is not possible due to the absence of a separate statistics for ethnic people. This is not irrelevant to mention here that, it is really difficult to introduce different education curricula and medium of instructions for each ethnic minority group, as most of these groups are numerically too small. Many of the groups even do not have necessary scripts required to use as a separate medium of instructions.

Dropout rates among female students are more also because of other reasons. As their resources are very limited, ethnic minority parents prefer to provide education to their sons at the expense of their daughters. Also the daughters have to help their mothers in household works. As most of the ethnic minority mothers are not literate, they continue to accept low life standard and vulnerability through generations.

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes that this is crucial for ensuring transparency and accountability in the organization's operations.

2. The second part of the document outlines the specific procedures and protocols that must be followed to ensure that all records are properly maintained and updated. This includes regular audits and reviews to identify any discrepancies or errors.

3. The final part of the document provides a summary of the key points and reiterates the importance of strict adherence to these guidelines.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

The CHT became a part of the then Pakistan (Bangladesh was then a part of Pakistan) in 1947 when India and Pakistan emerged as independent states on the basis of two-nation (Hindu and Muslim) theory from the British colony. The concept was that Pakistan for Muslims and India for Hindus. But there were many other religious minorities in India. So India decided to maintain secularism in the country. On the other hand, the basis of Pakistan was Islam. So the hill people of the CHT wanted to be with India as majority (almost 98%) of them were non-Muslims. But the politics behind the division of Indian sub-continent into India and Pakistan by the British government was not clear. Some Muslim territories (like Kashmir) came with India and some non-Muslim territories (like CHT) came with Pakistan.

On the other hand, with few exceptions, people of the CHT were not in favour of the liberation movement of Bangladesh against Pakistan in 1971, because the liberation movement was on the basis of Bengali nationalism; and the ethnic minority hill people were not Bengalis. So after the independence of Bangladesh when the hill people demanded autonomy for the CHT in 1972, the Government of Bangladesh did not pay heed to their demand. The hill people then organised themselves and started guerrilla war against the government of Bangladesh for separation, which continued till signing the peace accord in December 1997. So during the period from early seventies to late nineties development activities in the CHT were not possible due to insurgency problem. In this period the Bangladesh army constructed some roads mainly for their own use in the hills. So the hill people tried to resist these construction activities. They thought improved road communication would increase movement of official forces of the government in the hill tracts followed by increased Bengali Muslim settlers from the plains to the hills.

As there is no more insurgency problem after 1997, this is time to develop the CHT and the lives of hill people with emphasis to the hill women as a vulnerable group. Also this is time to share the success stories from other countries having similar experiences with ethnic minority people. With this in view, we can see how the respective governments dealt with the livelihood issues of Maoris in New Zealand, Inuits in Canada, Aboriginals in Australia, and Maasais in Kenya. If their policies proved successful, we can follow their experiences to handle the livelihood issues of ethnic minority hill people in Bangladesh.

The New Zealand government is willing to serve the interests of the Maoris along with mainstream population. For this, government has been rendering its support to the Maori community to reach their full potential towards improvement of their lives. Government is always moving forward the Maori issues through realistic social advancement by upholding their economy. It ensured equal employment opportunity for them with uniform wage for similar work. Government made the tertiary education free for ethnic minority people to support their aspirations for higher education. Government proved its success in removing barriers to social and economic development of Maori people by working together on various issues. Free medical services are also made available to the young Maori people less than 18 years, old people more than 65 years and for pregnant women. To protect the rights of Maoris the British Crown signed a treaty with the Maori chiefs in 1840, called the 'Treaty of Waitangi'. This treaty accorded them all rights and privileges of the British subjects. The Crown guaranteed to protect the chiefs' absolute authority over their lands, villages, and all possessions. Although the colonial government worked deliberately in violation of the treaty to acquire Maori land for European settlers, yet the treaty was the first step to substantive national sovereignty and a constitutional government in which Maori people's rights are an explicit concern (T. and K. Woods. 1996).

Inuit, the indigenous people in Canada was known as the 'Eskimos' to the outsiders for many centuries. About 55,700 Inuit live in 53 communities across Northern Canada. They originate in Canada date back at least 4,000 years, whereas the Europeans started settlement in Canada in mid-17th century. The Inuit had very little contact with the rest of Canada until 1940s. But when the Canadian government had begun to establish its presence in the Arctic region in the forties, the Inuit began to come to the contact of main stream population. Since then the Canadian government encouraged them to live in permanent settlements instead of living in seasonal camps. The Inuit did not have any legal possession of land until 1975. But during 1970s they negotiated with the Quebec Provincial Government and received some formal rights over land after an agreement signed in 1975. Before that the federal government gave its concurrence in favour of the claims of the Inuits in 1973. After that the provincial government signed several other agreements with the Inuit to meet the needs of the specific region. These agreements provided settlement package for the Inuit, which includes financial compensation, land rights, hunting rights and economic development opportunities for them (http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/info/info114_e.html, accessed on 31/10/2005).

The Australian federal parliament created the position of a Social Justice Commissioner in December 1992 under Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. The purpose for creation of this position is to place indigenous issues before the federal Government and the Australian community and thus to promote understanding and respect for the rights of Aboriginal and other indigenous people. Removal of social and economic disadvantage faced by the indigenous people is also another intention of the government. Thus the Australian government uneasily and unevenly moved to protect the distinct status and culture of its indigenous people along with their right to self-determination, and some right to land provided significant mineral deposits were not involved. As land provides the spiritual and cultural basis of indigenous people, the Aboriginal and other indigenous people in Australia have achieved

some positive outcomes from the active role of Social Justice Commissioner, but are still highly disappointed. Australian Government has also taken various steps to increase employment opportunities for indigenous people for their economic emancipation, but still the indigenous people are socially excluded and highly vulnerable.

The Kenyan government has made little movement towards improvement of livelihoods of the Maasais. Due to the failure of the State, indigenous people in Kenya are being denied access from ancestral lands. They are gradually losing their grazing lands for the cattle. They continue to live in hardship and danger as a consequence of discriminatory government policies. The State proved itself a failure in upholding the rights of its indigenous people.

The ethnic minority hill people in Bangladesh have not broken through into formal constitutional recognition like Maoris in New Zealand or Inuit in Canada. They have still been facing a similar fate as in the cases of Aboriginals in Australia and Maasais in Kenya. It is true that the process of losing lands by ethnic hill people in Bangladesh has been stopped after signing the peace accord, but the return of their ancestral lands which were already occupied by the Bengali settlers, is uncertain. Though this has been the major claim of ethnic hill people, implementation is very tough in practical sense. The Bengali settlers already occupied the lands of ethnic minority people, have not any alternative place to go; nor do they have any substitute source of livelihoods. Government cannot push them back to their previous settlement in the plains, as they left nothing there before migration to the hills. In fact, they settled in the hills under government sponsored settlement programmes in the hill districts.

Yet, the question of land rights of ethnic minority hill people must be resolved as land is the basis of their livelihoods, spirituality and culture. In a word the existence of ethnic hill people in Bangladesh depends on the use of land. But still, right to land is not the only problem to the ethnic people. They are lacking

of numerous things. They are lacking of trust of government as well as of mainstream population. They do not have their own, self-initiated and implemented educational and infra-structural facilities. They are not participatorily engaged in activities carried on by the government or donor agencies. The hill women are busy with unpaid household work or in subsistence agriculture or gathering wood from forest. The hill people live in insecurity where the women find themselves most unsecure. Hill people are afraid of sudden attack from Bengali settlers, though sometimes they also take the lead. They face economic exploitation due to the scarcity of marketing facility for agricultural products and some handmade products they make at home. Wage employment in the hills is very scarce. Though some employment opportunities have been created in road construction and road maintenance for the targeted women, wage rate is very low. Sources of livelihoods of the hill women are not diversified and their fall back position is too weak. So in following the good examples discussed above created by few governments in favour of ethnic minority/indigenous people live in those countries can be helpful.

Ethnic minority hill women in Bangladesh are facing livelihood challenges both from outside as well as their own society. Outside or external challenges they face from security forces and new Bengali settlers. While going out of homes for exploring livelihoods ethnic women apprehend of being raped by security personnel, though these are not common these days. Some undesirable incidences occurred during war time always haunt the ethnic minority women. Other external challenges to the way of their livelihoods are thrown by Bengali settlers migrated from the plains. The Bengali settlers relate these challenges to grabbing their agricultural lands. These challenges have also been gradually diminishing after signing the peace treaty. The stronger livelihood challenges the hill women face from within own society. They are overburdened by unpaid family work. Hardly can they spend any time for paid work. Most of the ethnic minority groups follow discriminatory traditional inheritance laws that deprive

women to inherit paternal property. These limit the capacity of ethnic women to succeed the livelihood struggles.

The hill districts of Bangladesh are lagging behind public services and utilities than the plains. The main reason is that most of the hill people live in villages; and the villages are remote and isolated and hard to reach due to the lack of communication network. During the period of conflicts implementation of development activities were neither possible nor the hill people could then have political favour from the government for development. And still the hill people cannot fully trust the government due to their past experiences. So the pace of development as well as public services and utilities are very poor in the hill districts. As ethnic women have less contact with the outer world than ethnic men, hardly they go out of their villages. So the poor public services hinder their attempts of exploring better livelihood strategies.

Improved livelihoods of ethnic women demand more attention and fair intention of the government. With a view to improve the livelihood situations of ethnic hill women some policy options can be taken into consideration. Most of the examples on the status of ethnic people in the countries mentioned above are not suitable to Bangladesh. The Kenyan case does not carry any better instances to follow. Conflicts are there among the civil societies in Kenya. The Canadian examples are impossible to follow. As unlike Canada much of fertile lands in the hills of Bangladesh are already occupied by the settlers from the plains. Difficulties are also there in following the instances of New Zealand, as the political situation in Bangladesh is quite different than that of New Zealand. Unanimous political decision in Bangladesh in favour of ethnic minority hill people is quite challenging. The Australian Social Justice Commissioner model may be applicable in Bangladesh to help remove economic and social disadvantages faced by ethnic minority hill women. But still problem is there in terms of good governance in Bangladesh.

However, as land grabbing by the Bengali settlers and scarcity of cultivable land in the hill districts are the two major issues against the livelihood opportunities for ethnic minority hill women as well as ethnic people as a whole in the CHT of Bangladesh, government should refrain further migration and settlement of peoples from the plains to the CHT. Moreover, modern agricultural opportunities must be provided and the ethnic hill people should be motivated to practice wet land cultivation in place of jum. In addition, the peace treaty signed in 1997 must be implemented in the shortest possible time.

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for ensuring transparency and accountability in financial reporting.

2. The second part of the document outlines the various methods and techniques used to collect and analyze data. It highlights the need for consistent and reliable data sources to support the findings and conclusions of the study.

3. The third part of the document presents the results of the analysis, showing the trends and patterns observed in the data. It includes detailed tables and graphs to illustrate the key findings and provide a clear visual representation of the information.

4. The final part of the document discusses the implications of the findings and offers recommendations for future research and practice. It suggests that the results of this study can be used to inform decision-making and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the processes being studied.

Bibliography

- Acharya, Jagatmani (2000) *Jumma People in Bangladesh*. A paper for the South Asia Forum for Human Rights. Available from: <<http://www.safhr.org/e-brief2.htm>> [accessed on 06/09/2005]
- ADB (2000) *Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Development Plan - Interim Report No. 9: Gender Issues*. Asian Development Bank, Dhaka.
- ADB (2000) *Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Development Plan, Interim Report No. 7: Sociology and Indigenous People*. Asian Development Bank, Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- Adnan, Shapan (2004) *Migration Land Alienation and Ethnic Conflict: Causes of Poverty in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh*. Research and Advisory Services, Dhaka.
- Agarwal, Bina (1994) *A Field of One's Own, Gender and Land Rights in South Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ahmed, Raisuddin and Mahbub Hossain (1990) *Developmental Impact of Rural Infrastructure in Bangladesh*. Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, Dhaka.
- Background of Jummas and CHT. Available from: <<http://www.angelfire.com/ab/jumma/bgground.html>> [accessed on 07/09/2005]
- Bangladeshi Settlers in the CHT*. Available from: <<http://www.angelfire.com/ab/jumma/settlers.html>> [accessed on 07/09/2005]
- BBS (2002) *Statistical Pocketbook of Bangladesh 2002*. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. Planning Division, Ministry of Planning, Dhaka.
- Becker, Gary (1981) *A Treatise on the Family*. Harvard University Press.

-
- Behari, Bepin (1990) *Rural Poverty and Unemployment*. Vikas Publishing House Private Limited, New Delhi.
- Beneria, Lourdes and Martha Roldan (1987) *The Crossroads of Class and Gender: Industrial Homework, Subcontracting and Household Dynamics in Mexico City*. University of Chicago Press.
- Beneria, Lourdes and Savitri Bisnath (1996) *Gender and Poverty: An Analysis for Action*. United Nations Development Programme, New York.
- Bhandari, Neena (2005) *Maoris Reap Benefits of Past Conservation*. Resource Centre for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Available from: <<http://www.galdu.org/english/index.php?odas=586>> [accessed on 16/09/2005]
- Bittman, Michael, Paula England, Liana Sayer, Nancy Folbre, and George Matheson (2003) *When Does Gender Trump Money? Bargaining and Time in Household Work*. American Journal of Sociology, volume 109. The University of Chicago.
- BRDB (1998) *National Workshop on Strategies for Poverty Eradication*. BRDB Institutional Support Project, Bangladesh Rural Development Board, Dhaka.
- BRDB (1998) *Study on Group Sustainability*. BRDB Institutional Support Project. Bangladesh Rural Development Board, Dhaka.
- Chakma, Kabita. *Speaking Notes on Chittagong Hill Tracts*. Available from: <<http://action.web.ca/home/sap/attach/chakma1.rtf>> [accessed on 27/08/2005]
-

- Chowdhury, Bushra Hasina (2002) *Building Lasting Peace: Issues of the Implementation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord*. A paper for the Program in Arms Control, Disarmament and International Security. University of Illinois at Urbana - Champaign, USA.
- DFID (2000) *Sustainable Livelihoods Framework*. Available from: http://www.ruaf.org/papussa/publications/pca/appendix_7_8.pdf [accessed on 18/10/2005]
- DFID. *DFID's Urban Livelihoods and Comparisons to Amartya Sen's Freedom Approach*. Available from: http://www.removingunfreedoms.org/DFID_livelihoods.htm [accessed on 18/10/2005]
- DIAND (2000) *Inuit March 2000*. Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Ottawa, Canada. Available from: http://www.aincinac.gc.ca/pr/info/info114_e.html [accessed on 31/10/2005]
- DuBois, David. *A Little Place Called Chiapas*. Available from: <http://www.umass.edu/writprog/willing3/desantis.htm> [accessed on 02/10/2005]
- Efting, Jennifer and Monica Urrutia (2003). *Working Class Women and Resistance Vol 113* -- March 3, 2003. Simon Fraser University's Online Independent Student News Letter. Available from: <http://www.peak.sfu.ca/the-peak/2003-1/issue9/fe-ciwd.html> [accessed on 09/10/2005]
- Ethnic Peoples. *Vietnam's Ethnic Minorities*. Available from: <http://www.vwam.com/vets/tribes/ethnicminorities.html> [accessed on 02/10/2005]
- FAO (2005) *In search of Excellence: Exemplary Forest Management in Asia and the Pacific*. Food and Agricultural Organisation, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. Available from:

<http://www.fao.org/documents/show_cdr.asp?url_file=/docrep/007/ae542e/ae542e00.HTM> [accessed on 01/10/2005]

- Hartmann, Heidi (1987) *The Family as the Locus of Gender, Class and Political Struggle: The Example of Housework* in Harding, Sandra ed. *Feminism and Methodology*. Indiana University Press.
- Hirway, Indira (1986) *Wage Employment Programmes in Rural Development: A Study of NREP in Gujarat*. Ahmedabad, India.
- ILO (1989) *Working Rights of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples*. Convention No. 169, International Labour Organisation, Geneva.
- Jensen, Krista, Jill Hayes, Jennifer Chong, Branden Casper and Ruth MacDonald-Schmidt (2001) *The Maasai People: Indigenous Stewards of a Threatened Land* Merc International Program Office, Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington.
- Jones, Michael E. and Joshua Hunter (2003) *Enshrining Indigenous Knowledge in the National Science Curriculum: Issues Arising from the Maori Case*. RCSD Conference, July 11-14, 2003, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai.
- Kabeer, Naila (1994) *Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thoughts*. Verso (Publications), London.
- Khan, Mokbul Ahmed & Nazmul Ahsan Kalimullah (2000) *Rural Development Policy 2000*. Bangladesh Project Management Institute, Dhaka.
- Krishna, Sumi (2004) *Livelihood and Gender*. SAGE Publications, New Delhi.
- Lang, Chris (2004) *World Rainforest Movement Vietnam: Government Repression of Indigenous Peoples*. Maldonado 1858 -11200 Montevideo, Uruguay.
- LGED (1998) *Project Proforma for Rural Road Maintenance Project in Three Hill Districts through Destitute Women*. Local Government Engineering Department, Dhaka.

- LGED (2004) *Feasibility Study Report on Greater Chittagong and Noakhali Districts Rural Infrastructure Development Project*. Local Government Engineering Department, Dhaka.
- Majumder, M. Humayun Kabir (2004) *The Nature and Extent of Income Generation by the Borrower Households of Grammen Bank Bangladesh* Economic Association, Dhaka.
- Mohsin, Amena (1997) *The Politicks of Nationalism: The Case of the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh* The University Press Limited, Dhaka.
- New Zealand in History. *The Maori: Brief Pre-History – Tangata Whenua: The local people*. Available from: <<http://history-nz.org/maori.html>> [accessed on 01/10/2005]
- New Zealand's Information Network. *History of the Maori*. Available from: <<http://www.newzealandnz.co.nz/maori/>> [accessed on 01/10/2005]
- Nyeu, Maung Ting (1991) *History of the Chittagong Hill Tracts from LIFE IS NOT OURS - Land and Human Rights in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh*. Report of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission, May 1991, Dhaka.
- OHCHR (2005) *The Human Rights News Letter No. 7, July 2005*. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Geneva.
- Pound, Barry, Snapp, Sieglinde, McDougall, Cynthia & Braun Ann (2003) *Managing Natural Resources for Sustainable Livelihoods*. Earthscan Publications Limited, UK, USA and Canada.
- Rahman, PK. M. Motiur (1994) *Poverty Issues in Rural Bangladesh*. University Press Limited, Dhaka.
- Roy, Devasish (1995) *Land Rights, Land Use and the Indigenous Peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts* in: Gain, Philip (ed.): *Bangladesh - Land Forest and Forest People*. Society for Environment and Human Development, Dhaka.

-
- Save the Children. *Rape and Abduction of Jumma Women*. Available from:
<<http://www.angelfire.com/ab/jumma/rape.html>> [accessed on
27/08/2005]
- Sen, Amartya (1990a) *Gender and Cooperative Conflicts* in Tinker, Irene ed.
Persistent Inequalities. Oxford University Press.
- Siddique, Quamrul Islam (1997) *Potentials for Development of Rural
Infrastructure in Chittagong Hill Tracts*. Paper from: Round Table
Discussion: *Legal and Economic Perspectives of Chittagong Hill Tracts*,
21 December 1997, Dhaka.
- Sillitoe, Paul (2000) *Indigenous Knowledge Development in Bangladesh:
Present and Future*. Intermediate Technology Publications Limited,
London.
- Sole, T. and K. Woods (1996) *Protection of Indigenous Sacred Sites: The New
Zealand Experience*. Ministry of Maori Affairs, New Zealand.
- Staveren, Irene van (2004) *Handout for Introductory Course 106 for 2004-2005
MA Programme* in the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague.
- UNO (1992) *The International Year for the World's Indigenous People*,
Department of Public Information United Nations Organisations, New
York.
- Valdes, Guadalupe. Linguistic Society of America. *Multilingualism*. Stanford
University, Washington DC. Available from:
<<http://www.lsadc.org/fields/index.php?aaa=multiling.htm>> [accessed on
18/10/2005]
-

WCC (2000) *Justice, peace, creation, tasks and concerns: Indigenous Peoples - Walking together towards tomorrow*. World Council of Churches
Geneva.

WFP (2003) *Rural Road Maintenance Programme in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh: A Baseline Report to the World Food Programme*.
Dhaka.

WFP (2004) *Baseline Survey of Women in the RMP and LSI Programmes in the Chittagong Hill Tracts*. World Food Programme, Dhaka.

