

COVERSHEET

Describing their Poverty: What the poorest say about being poor in rural Bangladesh

Updated April 2003

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This paper describes initial findings of a study on the perception of poverty of villagers in sixteen villages in eight agro-ecological zones in Bangladesh, carried out as part of the on-going Livelihoods of the Extreme poor research project being undertaken by PROSHIKA. Well-being rankings were carried out in all villages, which produced the expected categorization based on land size, food security, ownership of assets and education. Then the researchers discussed with different villagers, the non-poor and poorest, how they perceived their poverty in their village. While the better off villagers described widows, the disabled, chronically sick and those with many children as 'the poorest'. The poor said that 'the poorest' were those who could not access influential people or village institutions or were living alone without support. Gender as well as age, played a large part in defining the poorest in their view because the cultural context prevented women from undertaking activities that might improve their livelihoods. While those who were less poor said the poorest were 'idle' this was never the view of the poorest who often expressed the view that it was God's wish that they were poor. While participatory tools like wealth ranking may help in assessing poverty, this study shows the value of listening to the voices of the poorest (and the non-poor) in order to understand the barriers they perceive that keep them in poverty.

People's perceptions, livelihoods, extreme poor, Bangladesh

Word Count: 6,274

The paper to be presented at the conference 'Staying Poor: Chronic Poverty and Development Policy' to be held at the University of Manchester, 7 to 9 April 2003(www.chronicpoverty.org)

'I am poor because my father was poor, so I got married to a poor man, and now I am divorced I am poorer than poor...' Saleha from Patgram thana

Saleha is very poor and when you listen to her story you hear her tell of an acceptance of poverty, it is a part of her family's way of life. She feels she was born to stay poor. The fact that her husband has left her, and now she is alone is, to her, almost understandable, perhaps inevitable. Not everyone who is poor in Bangladesh is as poor as Saleha, but approximately half of Bangladesh's 130 million people live below the poverty line. Statistics indicate that the percentage decline in poverty rates is lower than the rate of population growth, so the absolute number of poor people is actually increasing. Because of the different definitions and methodologies used to determine the nature and extent of poverty it is difficult to judge the depth of poverty. Of particular concern are the approximately 30% of people in Bangladesh who live in 'extreme poverty' (BIDS, 1995), the majority of whom live in rural areas.

Terms such as 'absolute poor', 'extreme poor', 'hard core poor', 'poorest of the poor', 'ultra poor' are used seemingly interchangeably by a variety of organisations and studies. The poorest are defined according to a range of different criteria: the income or non-income dimensions of poverty (e.g. demographic, ecological, vulnerability; structural, social, political or economic factors); poverty as a 'state'; poverty as dynamic process; and poverty as an

outcome of an interplay of all of the above¹. Whatever approach is used, the fact remains that as a proportion of a population, the percentage figure of those living in 'extreme poverty' in Bangladesh is one of the highest in the world. The available evidence suggests that many development initiatives and interventions have had little impact on the extreme poor.

This paper looks beyond economic poverty and describes the combination of non-economic and economic factors that make and keep the poorest poor in Bangladesh. We describe people's perception of poverty both the views of those who are poor and the thoughts of those who are less poor about the poorest.²

Background

PROSHIKA, an NGO in Bangladesh, has undertaken a study entitled "The Livelihoods of the Extreme Poor" in collaboration with DFID. The purpose of the PROSHIKA study is to try and develop more effective ways of reaching the very poorest people.

The case studies presented in this paper come from the second phase of that study where the PROSHIKA team collected information on the lives of poor people living in 16 villages in various parts of Bangladesh.

¹ World Bank (1999); BRAC (2000); CARE (2000); Proshika (1999); Rahman and Hossain (1995).

² For a fuller account of the findings on 'people's perceptions of poverty' from the LEP study see Ahmed Borhan (2003).

The study villages of the Livelihoods of the Extreme Poor project were chosen purposively to represent each of the eight broad agro- ecological zones in Bangladesh. In each zone one *thana* (an administrative unit made up of a cluster of villages) which, according to the PROSHIKA records, contained a high concentration of the `extreme poor'³ was selected. Two villages were then selected from each *thana*, one close to *thana* headquarters (termed `central') and one further away (termed `remote') for detailed study. Rapid appraisal ranking exercises, particularly well being ranking techniques, were used to understand different categories of the extreme poor and the perception of the community towards the poor.

Participatory Classification of the EP

In focus group discussions in each village the people of our study areas categorized themselves into different classes. Using local concepts of well being and ill being villagers classified themselves on both economic and non-economic considerations. The study organized these well being ranking sessions in every village and used other rapid appraisal techniques to verify the findings. These sessions were facilitated by members of the study team.

Villagers began the discussions by drawing a social map and providing primary information for every household, which gave some sense about villagers status within community. The villagers (who represented different

³ According to PROSHIKA's definition of `extreme poor' and the PROSHIKA baseline study, see appendix 1 for the definition.

communities/gender/age, as appropriate) sorted the village households into different groups.

Therefore, all the villagers of both central and remote of eight study areas classified themselves in to different categories to distinguish the non-poor and poor sections. At the same time well being and ill being ranking was used to reveal the different terminology used to identify different classes of people of the village. We can summarise the main principles of well being and ill being classification of 16 villages used by the villagers:

- ?? Land holding status (amount of land)
- ?? Income & employment, occupation status, savings
- ?? Household structure
- ?? Quality and quantity of food intake
- ?? Education
- ?? Access to the local power structure
- ?? Access to the drinking water and sanitation
- ?? Dowry and age of daughter marriage
- ?? Access to the resources
- ?? Food security

Not everything in the list above was mentioned in each place. An example of the results of a ranking exercise is given in Annex 1.

We begin by looking at the words people used to describe the 'extreme poor' in their villages, the local terms are set out in the following table:

Table 1: Extreme poor terms (see annex for a fuller explanation of the terms⁴)

Name of the study areas	Words used in the Central village	Words used in the Remote village
Kotalipara	Achol (dependent), Nissho (have nothing)	Achol (dependent), Nissho (have nothing)
Rampal	Bastavita (homeless), Gharzia (sheltered), Dustha (destitute)	Nissho (have nothing), Onath (helpless)
Durgapur	Achol (dependent), Nissho (have nothing)	Aoshohai (helpless), Nirupai (helpless), Vikkhuk (professional beggar)
Puthia	Paitkata (day labourer), Nirupai (helpless)	Paitkata (day labourer), Nissho (have nothing)
Patgram	Fakir (beggar)	
Niamatpur	Mahali (labourer), Dinmajur (day labourer), Vikkhuk (professional beggar)	Dinmajur (day labourer), Vikkhuk (professional beggar)
Chakaria	Ninmasreni (lower class), Onath Garib (helpless like an orphan)	Kuli/Gour (day labourer), Vikkhuk (professional beggar),
Rangamati	Shrestha Garib (the poorest of the poor), Niriho Garib (helpless poor)	Garib (poor), Nadan Garib (worst poor not conscious regarding poverty)

The table shows some places used similar terms, but others used very different words to describe the 'extreme poor'. But even where similar terms were used they mean different things in different places. For example, the central villagers of both Kotalipara and Durgapur thana used the same terms (Achol and Nissho) to describe the extreme poor group. But when we compared the type of people they described we found that there were significant differences between the two areas in the type of people they described in terms of life style.

⁴ The translations are an attempt to convey the meaning of the words, for some words the context needs to be fully understood to really understand the breadth of meaning.

Local terms reflect the Categories of the Extreme Poor

In five places people described the poor according to a hierarchy, using different terms for those who had more assets or were considered to be in a better position than others.

Table 2: Ill being classification

Hierarchy of the poor	Local terms used to indicate the EP	Study areas
First category	Nisha (have nothing) Garib (poor),	Puthia
	Vikkuk (professional beggar), Mahali (labourer)	Niamatpur
	Achal (dependent), Dinmajur (day labourer)	Kotalipara
	Nisha (have nothing), Bastavita (homeless)	Rampal
	Karmamajur (day labourer), Dinmajur (day labourer)	Patgram
Second category	Nisha (have nothing), Fakir (beggar)	Kotalipara
	Fakir (beggar)	Patgram
	Gharzia (sheltered), Onath (helpless like an orphan)	Rampal
	Dinmajur (day labourer)	Niamatpur
	Paitkata (day labourer)	Puthia
Bottom-most category	Vikkuk (beggar)	Niamatpur
	Dustha (destitute)	Rampal
	Nirupai (helpless)	Puthia
Single category (no hierarchy)	Shrestha Garib (poorest of the poor), Nadan Garib (worst poor not conscious regarding poverty)	Rangamati
	Nirupai (helpless), Aosahai (helpless)	Durgapur
	Onath Garib (helpless poor like an orphan)	Chakaria

See: the annex for a list of extreme poor categories with explanations

Heterogeneity of the Extreme Poor

The way the extreme poverty were defined varied from place to place and also in each village because the poor are a heterogeneous group. Such kinds of

perception on ill being classification depends on the value judgement of the people categorising a certain person or group. The poorest may use one term about themselves and the less poor or non-poor use a different term, which may be negatively value-laden to describe the poorest.

Types of poor household

Among the poorest households we found the following types of households:

Child managed households

The study finds some households fully depend on a child who is responsible for managing the household. Sometimes a household has no adult male member and the women can not go out side for cultural reasons and in this context children take the responsibility. Such households could be badly off because the children cannot access services and also cannot work, or cannot work regularly, to maintain the home. For example,

Akram is a 16 year- old boy who works in the silver business in Barisal. He is a head of household, and struggle to survive. After his father death Akram started working as a labourer, for which he earned a small salary. The family's economic crisis thus forced him into work at a very early age and prevented him from going to school.... (Ref: Kotalipara (I)-4)⁵.

Female headed households

⁵ All names have been changed. The full text of the case studies can be found in PROSHIKA (2003).

The study found that some of the poorest households were led by women. Such kinds of households have more chance to remain in long term poverty for different reasons. Socially they are more vulnerable and cultural constraints hinder them from undertaking productive work outside the household. From field observation we study found a range of different types of female-headed households.

Firstly, the female abandoned by husband with no income earner is more vulnerable than the female abandoned by husband with an income earner son.

Secondly, the female divorced by husband with large number of infant children has more chance of becoming chronically poor than the female who is divorced by husband with no children.

Thirdly, the female who is a widow with a large number of daughters is more vulnerable and falls into insecurity than the female who is a widow with an income earner son. Such kinds of female-headed households are not able to cultivate and construct livelihood options due to different socio-political causes and for these reasons they face hardship to maintain livelihoods. For example, *Khaleda 35 years, a divorced woman, lives in a village in Patgram. She lives in poverty and has no children to help her. She is a day labourer in the fields and also works as a house cleaner. As her opinion she gets very less wage than men. She complains that some people take advantage of her when she asks for*

help in purchasing things in the village. Many women do not go out in the village for shopping or recreation, as usually only the male family members do so. Since she has no male members in her family, she often depends on her neighbours to buy things for her. (Ref: Patgram (I)-3)

Female burden households

The study found some households that have a number of daughters were more likely to be among the extreme poor. These households have the burden of arranging dowry and paying for the marriage of each daughter. For example: *Promila Sarder is a forty-year-old widow who lives in Santa'l Para. Her husband died ten years ago. She has three daughters: Anu, 24; Renu, 22; and 10-year-old Benu.... Promila had two young daughters at that time, and she thought a great deal about arranging their marriages. She gave 3000 taka for Anu's marriage dowry. For Renu, it was determined that the dowry would be 4000 taka, and she agreed to give that amount, but has thus far failed to pay it in full. She gave only 1000 taka, and promised that she would give the remainder within a very short time. However, she has failed to fulfill her obligation, and her daughter has faced harassment from her husband and his family as a result. (Ref: Puthia (I)-7)*

Old aged people

Old people living alone have difficulty maintaining their livelihood. They are often not capable of working. Usually they also excluded from social and political

activities, which indicates their powerlessness and inadequate social network within society. And in the long run these households can be very vulnerable. For example,

"Seventy-year-old Azizullah lives in a village in Durgapur. He has no land and has four sons but all have moved away from him. Now he is a beggar and now completely blind. He is not a member of any NGO or any other organization. He said that he has not received any type of assistance from the government or any NGOs.... He also said that at present he has nothing, save for his own life (Ref: Durgapur (I)-2)".

Chronically ill

In the analysis of extreme poverty situation we found that chronic illness is one of the main causes of extreme poverty. The study finds some extreme poor households have chronically ill heads of household or the main income earner is chronically ill. Since chronically ill persons either have no scope or are not capable of working, not able to keep in touch with the community and maintain their social network, as result they, and their families can fall into poverty. For example,; *Mohammed Basir Ali, 30, has a disability. He used to gather pieces of coal and sold it for fifty per maund (1 maund = 37 Kg). He says that about seven months ago his right leg became infected with a disease that causes the flesh to die. To pay the cost of his health care he has been forced to sell all of his assets. To date, he has not received any assistance from the government or any non-*

governmental organizations. At present, Basir feels that he can do nothing more but pass the days with worry (Ref: Durgapur (I)-I).

Ethnic minority

Extreme poverty also affected minority groups in the study areas. Ethnic minorities who are the extreme poor face many insecurities particularly if they live in an area dominated by another group. For example, " *Shanker Rangsha is a 77-year-old man who lives largely alone in Durgapur. He had six children but now all are deceased. He has only a very small amount of land but no farmland. Now he is not able to do some thing because of his old age. He laments that usually when he is ill no body helps to cook for him and so does not eat any thing at those times. His opinion is that because of being ethnic minority he does not get any support from government. For example, despite his destitution, he has not received a Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) card.*

The bottom category of the extreme poor may be defined, using the CPRC terminology, as chronic poor, while those below the poverty line but above the chronic poor, because they have more assets or support, may be called the transient poor.

Transient extreme poor	Chronic extreme poor
?? Able to construct opportunities for livelihoods option	?? Lack of opportunities to construct livelihoods option
?? Risk taking ability	?? Lack of risk taking ability
?? Having multiple livelihoods option	?? Lack of multiple livelihoods option

??	Having negotiation option	??	Lack of negotiation power
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Composition of resources: transient & chronic nature of extreme poverty

The study reveals that the people of chronic poor group are more or less excluded from many social networks. Due to different constraints they are not able to maintain good relationships with institutions, groups or with rich people. In some cases we have seen that the people of transient extreme poor group have established good connections with the local *mahajan* (money lender) or land owner but some times such kinds of relationships appear to be exploitative.

Villagers' Perceptions towards the Extreme Poor

People's perception of poverty is important in understanding how they think about poverty and how they treat the poor, or think of themselves if they are those poor people. What is poverty in their value judgment. Who do they call the poorest? But perceptions are not homogenous. Different people have different perceptions. From our field study we found differences of perception on causes of extreme poverty between non-poor and poor sections.

The Local Terms Contain the Views

Non-poor groups often use 'unpleasant terms' to identify the extreme poor on the other hand extreme poor groups use 'lack of capacity terms' to identify themselves. For example, the non-poor frequently used the term '**Fakir**', '**Gharzia**', **Nadan Garib** to identify the extreme poor group which shows the negative connotation regarding the extreme poor groups (derogatory terms meaning beggar, hated poor etc). But when the extreme poor group define themselves by using different terms like, '**Aosahai**' (helpless), '**Nirupai**' (helpless), '**Niriho garib**' (helpless poor) usually they try to define themselves in terms of a lack of capacity. These terms refer to defenselessness, incapable in the existing reality, sense of deprivation.

Table 3: Non-poor and poor uses of local terminology and views:

Name of the Group	Local terminology to classify EP groups	Perceptions of the extreme poor	
Non-poor	Nissho (have nothing), Gharzia (sheltered), Dustha (destitute), Paitkata (day labourer), Fakir (beggar), Dinmajur (day labourer), Onath Garib (helpless poor like an orphan), Nimnasreni (lower class), Shrestha Garib (poorest of the poor), Nadan Garib (worst poor not conscious regarding poverty), Kuli or Gour (day labourer)	?? ?? ?? ?? ?? ?? ?? ?? ?? ?? ??	They are idle No plan & confidence regarding future Not able to do and also manage work Have nothing in their HH Shy and scared to interact with people Can't realize reality of life (present and future) Tend to expand family member They are nasty and mixing with them reduce social status Unskilled and illiterate
Poor	Achol (dependent), Bastavita (homeless), Nirupai (helpless), Vikkhuk (professional beggar), Niriho Garib (helpless poor), Aoshohai (helpless),	?? ?? ?? ?? ?? ??	They don't get sufficient work and wage They have none Have no way to survive Helpless situation no other option to get better work they have no ownership of different assets

	Garib (poor)	??	Physically they are weak
		??	Don't get support from government
		??	Livelihoods insecurity
		??	Deprivation from social rights

Non-poor views: Poor Staying Poor

Some of the very common comments of the non-poor regarding the extreme poor we found in our study area are given below:

Comments of Non-poor towards EP	Inner Meanings
<i>Fokirnir pute ra ek din kam korle dui din boisa khai</i> (means destitute work a day and take rest several days).	Apathy towards work/Reluctant to work
<i>Ora poribar re khaoai te pare na kintu bochor bochor bacha poida dei</i> (means, can not afford family subsistence but make family size big)	Having large family
<i>Shalago obvas kharap</i> (means, they poses bad practices)	Malpractice and behavioral problem
<i>Ora tou thik moto kotha koite pare na, aar kam korbo ki</i> (means, can not interact and behave properly so how can manage work)	Lack of confidence

Apathy towards work

The non-poor people believe that the extreme poor people dig their 'grave of poverty' themselves. As we find the opinion of non-poor people in different areas towards the extreme poor is "*tara kono kaj kore na*" that means they are not active. They perceive that most of the poorest people are not industrious rather than their laziness and apathy towards work is the significant factor of extreme poverty. They also mentioned that if they work for a day usually they take rest for several days afterwards. Apart from this they think that the poorest sections are

not well educated, skilled and experienced so they are not able to get beneficial work.

Cultural Practices

Beside this they mentioned that cultural aspects and practice are also responsible for their extreme poverty. A good number of non-poor people emphasized big family size as a cause of their extreme poverty. They mentioned that most of the poorest people's families consist of large numbers and for this reason they have to face financial problems to meet every body's basic needs. According to the non poor people the poorest section of people have not planned about their livelihoods and very little understanding about family planning.

As regards the ethnic minorities who are extreme poor, the non-poor often assume that they over indulge in alcohol which keeps them poor.

Lack of confidence

The non-poor group perceive that the extreme poor don't have much confidence to interact with people, they want to establish their rights and as a whole they have no faith in themselves regarding their capabilities to change their position in society.

Denial of social rights

Different formal and informal institutions often don't give the poorest people access to various facilities. For example, the poorest people do not get proper access to the *Khas* (communal) land though they have right to use such resources.

Poor views: Making and keeping us poor

Some of the very common comments of the poorest regarding themselves in our study are given below:

Comments of Poorest towards themselves	Inner Meanings
<i>Chas korar zomi nai</i> (means, have no arable land)	Lack of natural assets
<i>Sorire bol pai na prottek din kam koroner</i> (means, can't do work every day because of physical weakness)	Weakness of human capital
<i>Songsare khaoia besi kamainna nai</i> (means, dependent member is more and lone income earner)	Financial insecurity
<i>Osukh bisukh e songsar chalano khub kosto ekmatro mabud chalai</i> (means, only god knows how family survive during illness)	Chronic illness and lack of confidence
<i>Mazi chara nouka zemon aar purus manus chara songsar temon</i> (means, without having adult male member in a family very much likely to a boat without a sailor)	Lack of adult male member in HH
<i>Amra 'maia manus' ra sob kam korte pari na, 'purus' ra nindai er lyga cholai dai</i> (means, women can not do everything as male dominant society harass)	Cultural barriers

Lack of option for opportunity construction

The poorest group perceptions on extreme poverty are quite different from the non-poor views. As the opinion of poorest peoples that "*amra kicchu karte parina*" that means they have no opportunity to do some things. The poorest section of people mentioned that they have no access to different formal and

informal institutions. Due to the lack of participation in institutions they don't get work regularly and don't get information related to the income sources.

Social exclusion: a root causes of extreme poverty

Social exclusion is very linked with the process of the way of examined how and why individual and groups fail to access or benefit from possibilities offered by societies. It is also linked with social injustice and deprivation that produces inequality in economic, social and political spheres. Regarding this fact the people among the poorest group often believed that social exclusion is the root cause of extreme poverty. The study shows that in daily life most of the extreme poor are engaged in the informal labour market and have no proper access to the formal market due to lack of social network. Moreover, in the informal labour market they are more or less excluded from getting lucrative work.

The study finds that the poorest people who are female heads of household, chronically ill or old aged people often they do not get access to the programmes supported by NGOs or other institutions.

We were often told by the poorest people that NGO programmes cannot provide strong support for them. They allege that the terms and conditions for repayment are unfavourable. The study also finds that *mahajan* (money lender) loan is very risky for the poorest people. It is very tough for them to repay the loans of

mahajan's because of high interest. In some cases they lose everything and become destitute.

Powerlessness regenerate extreme poverty

As the opinion of poorest section people they are extreme poor because they are powerless. The term 'powerlessness' also refers to helplessness to defend or protect themselves from various situations or exploitation, inability to control different resources, less bargaining power. They are powerless because financially they are very weak, they have no social identity, and they have no access to the political involvement. Such kinds of powerlessness generate extreme poverty. Due to the powerlessness extremely poor people don't get proper wages due to their lack of bargaining power and cannot access common property resources.

Conclusion

The poorest people in Bangladesh are not an homogeneous group as our findings show. The perceptions about the poor are also varied, depending on the social and economic status of the person 'judging' the poor. Many of the poorest, like Saleha who we quoted at the beginning of this paper, believe they are born to stay poor... it is their fate. Understanding what different people think about poverty and different people's position in society and their right to a voice is important if interventions that can increase people's sense of self-worth, as well as their material well-being are to be successful.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful for to all our colleagues in the Livelihoods of the Extreme Poor Study team for their contributions to this paper: Nasrin Sultana, Munshi Israil Hossain, Mohammed Kamruzzaman, Sinora Chakma, Mayee, Ahmed Borhan, Shamsun Nahar, Mohammed Shazzad Hossain, Atiquer Rahman and Anila Pervin. We are very grateful to PROSHIKA and DFID for supporting this study and to the people of the study communities for the time they spent with us and the invaluable information they shared.

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Annex 1

An example of the findings from one well-being ranking in Talbonia village is given below:

Criteria	Dhani (Rich)	Maddhabitta (Middle Class)	Garib (Poor)	Extreme Poor		
				Bastavita (E. Poor)	Gharzia	Dustha
Land both Agri & homestead	10-20 Bigha	5-8 Bigha	1-2 Bigha	Only Homestead	Actually have no own land but some people have land that get from relative like, father in law	Have no land both (homestead & cultivable)
Production Status	Surplus crops after food consumption	Get 12 months food from production.	They get only 3 months food from production	They have no land of production	They have no land of production	They have no land of production
Occupation	Salary paid Job, Gheer cultivation, Agricultural cultivation and shrimp business & others.	Gheer cultivation, Agricultural cultivation and shrimp business.	Gheer cultivation with small scale, Agricultural cultivation in own land and some time they leased other land with year basis contract	Day labour, van puller, collector of wood, gool pata, noal from sundarban.	Day labour, Van puller, Contract labour in gheer land	Beggar, Day labour but don't get regular work, Fishing (both fish & crab)
Type of house	House made of brick, wood and roof with tin and gool.	House made of wood, tin and roof with tin and gool.	House made of noal, bamboo and roof with tin and gool.	House made of noal, bamboo, and roof with straw and gool.	House made of noal, bamboo, and roof with straw and gool	House made of noal, bamboo, and roof with straw and gool but their housing condition is very nasty
Latrine Condition	They use pacca latrine	They use samipacca and also use katcha latrine.	They use katcha latrine.	Some use katcha and most of them use open field.	Some use katcha and most of them use open field	Some use katcha and most of them use open field
Sources of Drinking Water	They use deep tube-well water for drink and cooking and use pond water for bathing.	They use deep tube-well water for drink and cooking and use pond water for bathing.	They use deep tube-well water for drink and cooking and use pond water for bathing.	They use deep tube-well water for drink and cooking and use pond water for bathing.	They use deep tube-well water for drink and cooking and use pond water for bathing.	They use deep tube-well water for drink and cooking and use pond water for bathing. They have no tube-

						well and pond.
Food Consumption	They take food three or more time in a day and they take standard food.	They take food three times in a day but their food standard is not equal of rich people	They take low standard food two or three times in a day	They have no fixed menu about food taking in a day. Some day they take two times and some day they three times in a day	They have no fixed menu about food taking in a day. Some day they take two times and some day they three times in a day	Their food consumption depends on working status. If they get regular work then they take two or three meals in a day but more than six months they take one or two meals in a day and their food quality is low standard
Education	This class is more educated than other classes & all of their children regularly go to the school	This class is less educated than rich and most of their children also regularly go to the school.	This class is low educated and 30% of their children go to school	This class is fully uneducated but now a day in some families sends their children to school.	A little number of people are primary pass	This category's people are fully uneducated and they have no ability to send their child to school

Annex 2.

Achol: (dependent group)

This term is used by the central villagers of Durgapur and both villagers of Kotalipara thana. Though villagers of both areas use this term to determine some extreme poor groups but we find differences of resources composition among them. The people of this poorest group of the central village of Durgapur thana have only homestead (very small size) land. On the other hand Achol of Kotalipara thana, some of them having a little amount of arable land and some having only homestead. But this group of both areas is vulnerable in terms of their ownership of assets and nature of job. We also find variations of different extreme poor groups within their community in terms of central and remote location. The Achol of Kotalipara thana is different from other extreme poor group Nissho, within same location and also central-remote location. The extreme poor of Achol group in central village get some short of institutional access for living very near to Kotalipara thana sadar but achol of remote village don't get such facilities. We also find differences among those categories in terms of working opportunities, food security, health and sanitation facilities etc. Nissho is more vulnerable than Achol because they are more or less excluded from the society.

Vikkuk / fakir

Though the terms 'Vikkuk' and 'Fakir' refers to beggar that means a pauper who lives by begging but difference is that 'Vikkuk' is more professional and 'Fakir' is not professional and their dependency ratio are not same'. Fakir some times changes their profession and usually they engage in begging in the critical moment. In remote village of Chakaria and Niamatpur Thana, and central village of Patgram Thana the villagers place *vikkuk* (beggar) in the bottommost layer in the village, they have neither arable land nor homestead only living on begging and food consumption depends on how much they collect in begging. Begging profession is the last option for a people. Fakir in the central village of Patgram is different from begging in terms of different access to the institutions. Some time they get different help from Zaminder of this area. They also live on their land.

Nissho-

Term Nissho is articulated by the remote village of Puthia and Kotalipara thana that means the poorest who have nothing. But this category in all agro-ecological regions is not same in terms of its identification. In Puthia Thana Nissho are those who have no either homestead or arable land and occupationally day labour in different sectors. But some of the households of Nissho in central village in Kotalipara thana have a small amount of homestead land. Actually in both areas the people of this class are more vulnerable because they have no regular working opportunity and food crisis is another dominant feature in their

livelihoods. Most of the people of this class live on *Khas* or other provided land and they are very much deprived from the institutional access of the society.

Nirupai

Nirupai refers to the people who have no way to survive The villagers of central village of Durgapur and Puthia thana used the term. In these villages *Nirupai* are those who take three times meal not year the round, only homestead and also live in *Khas* and other provided land with poor sanitation and housing pattern. They don't get regular work and other facilities from the society. They have no ability to manage or remain in good relationship with different institutions. They are not able to promote their livelihoods because they are not able to exchange their capital resources.

Ashohia

The remote villagers of Durgapur thana categorized the Ashohai class in bottom most layer and define them as helpless or defenselessness having only very small portion of homestead land, only take food two times a day and do day labouring activities. They get very low wage and cannot bargain with employers given the fact that they will starve with out daily wage. The person who engages in stone and sand collection is bound to sell with very low price due to market dominance. They have no good interaction with both formal and non-formal institutions and for this reason they don't have proper access to such institutions.

Niriha Garib

The people of central village in Rangamati Thana classified total population into different categories and reckon the bottom most class as Niriha Garib. The advocate about this class as some of them homestead and some of them have no homestead living on others land, without begging same sorts of occupation like the extreme poor placed in the last category, prior to bottom most layer of the ill being, sometimes able stock food for the lean period, poor housing and no sanitation arrangements like the bottom most extreme poor.

Sreshta Garib

Another important class of the bottom most category is the Sreshta Garib that is articulated by the central villagers of Rangamati Thana. Sreshta means main or prime and Garib mean the poor. Most of the people of this category have no homestead land, live on the land of absentee land owner or live in *Khas* land and very few of them have homestead, living on fishing, housemaid, begging and day laboring work, two meals in crisis period, literacy rate is almost nil, some of them only can sign, poor housing and sanitation arrangements, place in the bottom most category. The people of this category are defenseless and vulnerable because they have no security of living because in any moment they may evict by the different actors like, landowner, administrative defense agencies, terror etc.

Anath Garib

This poor group term is used by the villagers of Central village in Chakaria thana and they place in the last category. As the opinion of them anath Garib are those who have neither homestead nor arable land live on Zamindar's land, occupation day labourer, fishing labour, housemaid, having no material assets, education level is up to primary level, instead of fragile economic condition the price of the dowry is very high 10,000- 15,000 taka, food deficit is common, housing and sanitation is relatively better than other extreme poor who are in the last category. In this village such types of people are actually in-migrated. The people of this group are vulnerable because they have no proper access to the market and for this reason they do not get real price of fish. They are vulnerable in terms of natural disaster of these areas like, flood, cyclone etc.

Nimnasreni

The Central villagers in Chakoria Thana classified another poor group as Nimnasrani, they have neither arable land and homestead with better occupational opportunity of fishing labour, goods seller, tailor and education level is up to primary level much better than other poor groups, housing and sanitation is good. Few houses can take three times meal regularly but insufficient in terms of quantity and quality, most of the households are habituated to take meal two times. They are the extreme poor group just before the last category. The people of this group most of the man are fisherman but they have neither boat nor fishing net and for this reason they have to go sea as day labour in boat but get very low wage with high risk job.

Dustha

The villagers of central village in Rampal thana place this class in to the last group of the extreme poor that means destitute; they have neither homestead nor cultivable land. Their occupation is begging, irregular day labouring activities, fishing both fish and crab, with very poor housing condition. In terms of food consumption they face most vulnerable in lean period mostly irregular. No ability sends their children to school. This group is more vulnerable in terms of socio-economical reflection of this area. In this area the destitute people exploited by the rich and dishonest people. As the opinion of such group the causes of their being destitute that their land and property has occupied by the mussel man class rich people.

Bastavita

Villagers of Central village in Rampal thana placed the *Bastavita* class in the bottom most layer. The *Bastavita* extreme poor are those who have only homestead with occupation of day labouring activities, van pulling, wood and leave collecting from Sundarban. They live in straw and bamboo made house and poor sanitation –katcha latrine or open field, no source of clean and safe water, for drinking they take deep tube well water from well off houses and for cooking and bathing use pond's water.. Most of them are uneducated, some families now days are sending their children to school. The people of this class

maintain their livelihoods with difficulty in lean periods and also in the time of natural disaster.

Ghrzia

The villagers of central village in Rampal Thana categorized this class in the bottom most layer of ill being classification on the basis of residence status. Gharzia are those who migrated by marriage and then settle on the land of father in law. The people of this class are socially poor because other peoples of this village blamed them as *Gharzia*. They are engaged in different occupation of day labourer, contact laborer in shrimp cultivation, van puller, similar types of house and sanitation condition like Basthvita.