

Agriculture Laborers sufferings with low wage: A study in Northern Bangladesh

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Abstract: Bangladesh is predominantly an Agricultural Country where agriculture sector plays a vital role in accelerating the economic growth. Agriculture is much more labor intensive sector. The Northern part of the Country is very fertile and suitable for agro-based production. But, the Agro-labor force is very neglected in that zone. They are discriminated in terms of wage, labor-hours, life style etc. To identify and measure the sufferings of the Agro-laborers, the researcher used a semi-structural questionnaire in face to face interviewing of the laborers both male and female in Rajshahi and Rangpur Area of Northern Bangladesh and found the real social and economic sufferings of the concerned group of people.

Introduction:

Northern Bangladesh is considered as Agricultural area especially. Many crops are produced in this zone such as paddy, wheat, sugarcane, corn, potato, liche, mango, different medicinal plants, different spicy plants and many types of vegetable etc. The Govt. of Bangladesh emphasized on agriculture of Northern part of this country and established a specialized Bank “Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank”. Bangladesh is being industrialized very rapidly. So, the necessary labor is expected and demanded by mills and factories from Agriculture sector. So, Agro-laborer is reducing day by day due to industrialization. Many industries have been established in Northern districts like Bogra, Dinajpur, Rajshahi, Panchagar etc. So, Agro-laborers reducing due to industrialization in that zone. It is very alarming for Agriculture. Moreover about 48% percent people and 69% females are employed in Agriculture of Bangladesh. (Labor force survey-2010). The Agro-laborers who are employed permanently in this sector and in that part are not happy at all. Because, they are deprived from expected wage according to their labor. They have been sufferings for year often year. Employers take the opportunity of their poverty in recruiting them. They are no willing to proper wage to the labors.

Under the circumstances, the study has been conducted to reveal the real scenario of that part regarding Agriculture and Agricultural laborers.

Unemployment of the problem

Most of the Northern agriculture workers are land less and they are neglected in the rural power structure. Even they are exchange from labor right, education, health and basic social service. Some of them are tenant and sharecroppers. Female workers in North Bengal are concentrated in low productive sectors. They are more deprived. However “Monga” a seasonal hangs has become a common problem in this zone. So, to overcome all the critical issues, the researcher part put forward the study in a scientific way.

Review of literature

In our Country many research works have been conducted on agriculture. But Comparatively few researches have been conducted on the subject “Agriculture laborers sufferings with low wage : A study in Northern Bangladesh”. Because the conception of Bangladesh’s Northern agriculture laborers is the specific division-wise study, But it is not possible to collect all the research papers in a limited time. I Point out mentionable discussion of the research paper and article written by the researchers which I have collected through my Endeavour and ability.

I can know that what type of research in what point of view has been done on subject “Agriculture laborers sufferings with low wage : A study in Northern Bangladesh” by literature review. I can also understand what type of new information is needed to collect. I have tried to fulfill the lacking of the information of various researches through my limited knowledge and capacity. Selim Raihan & ILO (2012) Conducted a study on “Economic Reforms and agriculture in Bangladesh”. It is an evaluative research. This publication is an outcome of a European Union funded project, which is being implemented by the international labor Organization, entitled “ Assessing and Addressing the effect of Trade on Employment (LFTE). This project aims to provide

its constituents with capacity building, sound research evidence and platform for discussion and formulation of national policies related to trade and employment. This study considers several scenarios for economic reforms at the global regional and domestic level that have important for the agricultural sector and the overall economy of Bangladesh. Unilateral agricultural trade liberalization would increase import of agricultural products. This would result in the contraction of the agricultural sector. Over all, the industrial and services sectors would contract also. There would be a large employment loss for unskilled labor, especially live stock rearing, poultry rearing and fishing sub-sectors. In the case of unilateral agricultural trade liberalization, the government therefore would need to be careful. Finally, a rise in total factor productivities in the cereal crop sector would lead to a great expansion of that sub-sector. Overall, the agricultural sector would experience a large loss of jobs for unskilled labor. Therefore, even though employment would increase in the overall industrial and services sectors, the employment effect on unskilled labor. [Selim Raihan & ILO December-2012]

[Mohammad Shahid Ullah-Agriculture of Bangladesh, Challenge of Agriculture of Bangladesh, Characterizing of agriculture of Bangladesh, Sharecroppers Conducted that agriculture is the largest sector of employment in Bangladesh]---According to labor force. Surveys (LFS) 2010, among the employed population in Bangladesh, about 48% of employed person are employed in agriculture sector. The LFS 2010 estimated that of the total employed person as high as 47.56% was engaged in agriculture sector followed by service (35.35%) and industry sector (17.52%). In the industry sector (12.44%) was in manufacturing sector and the rest in other industries. The majority of the female are employed in agriculture sector, about 69%. For the females, the highest 64.84% was engaged in agriculture sector followed by service sector (21.89%) and industry sector (13.32%). For the males, the highest 41.11% was engaged in the service sector followed by agriculture (40.18%) and industry (19.60%). The majority of the People are living in rural areas and women are mainly employed in home based agricultural activities. Women have increased their labor substantially for poultry raising homestead gardening and non-farm services. It should be noted that structural changes and modernization of the economy have affected men and women differently.

Characteristics of Agriculture laborers in Bangladesh

Agricultural laborers are deprived and neglected section in the rural power structure they are excluded from labor right, educations, health and basic social services. They are trapped in unequal social relation that there is no or very limited opportunity for upward social and economic mobility. The agricultural laborers are both extreme and chronic poor. They are comprised from landless, functional landless, sharecropper and marginal farmers and constitute the majority of the rural population. One of the specific characteristics of the agricultural sector is the lack of clear-cut distinctions between different categories of workers, farmers, tenant and sharecroppers. Consequently, there are numerous types of labor relations and different forms of labor force participation are in practice in agriculture.

Geographic distribution of Agriculture laborers in Bangladesh

In terms of geographic distribution of agricultural laborers, it has been found that highest no. of agricultural households are located at Rajshahi division followed by Dhaka division. Of the total, more than One-Third (34%) agriculture labor households are situated in Rajshahi division and more than One-fourth (25%) are in Dhaka division. In Chittagong division, Khulna and Barisal division, it has been found 14.4%, 15.2% and 5.42% respectively. In Sylhet division, it has been found lower, 5.15% [Source: 2011 Yearbook of Agricultural statistics of Bangladesh]. The highest no. agriculture house hold is concentrated in Satkhira district and lowest no in Dhaka district, 52% and 4% respectively. In terms of concentration of agricultural labor house hold, there is difference within the district and upazilla in terms of rate of urbanization distance from town. Bangladesh Agriculture has labor deficit and labor surplus. Agriculture generates seasonal employment for laborers. In general, the districts having less than 25% of agriculture labor households, faces deficit of labor generally in the whole season and particularly in peak season. These districts are highly labor deficits area. Generally these districts depend totally on migrated labor supplied mostly from the districts. These districts are labor surplus area and are mostly from Rangpur division. In general, agricultural labor migrates seasonally from Rangpur division to other parts of the Country, especially Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet division. Highly deficit districts which agriculture labor household are less than 20%. These district are Dhaka, Narayanganj, Chittagong, Gazipur, Narsingdi, Jhalokhati, Sylhet. Another side highly surplus area which agriculture labor household 41% and above. These district are Thakurgaon, Jessore, Netrakona, Jamalpur, Sherpur, Dinajpur, Naogaon, Natore, Lalmonirhat, Gaibandha, Meherpur, Kurigram, Satkhira. The major factors behind the surplus labor in agriculture sector are high Prevalence of poverty, limited Scope to diversity the scope of income from non-agriculture and low-rate of international labor migration. (Source : Year book of Agricultural Statistics of Bangladesh 2011. BBS, Government of Bangladesh, www.bbs.gov.bd)

According to Bangladesh Agricultural labor wages from BBS Chapter 2- Employment ,wages and wage indices, it has been found that the daily wage rate at the national labor wage highest is Barisal division tk. 432 (male) tk. 350 (female) and smallest in Rangpur division tk. 315 (male) tk. 238 (female). [Mohammad Shahid Ullah-Agriculture of Bangladesh, Challenge of Agriculture of Bangladesh, Characterizing of agriculture of Bangladesh, Sharecroppers Conducted that agriculture is the largest sector of employment in Bangladesh] (Pages 1,3,5,6,7,8,14,15,16,21)

Shabe Emran & Forhad shilpi-world Bank Group (Oct 2014) Conducted a study on “Agricultural Productivity, Hired labor, Wage and Poverty: Evidence from Bangladesh” [Page 1-2]

A Common approach to analyzing the effects of agricultural growth on rural Poverty has been to estimate its impacts on rural wages (see, among others, Foster and Rosenzweig (2004), Lanjouw and Murgai (2009). This is motivated by the observation that a significant proportion of poor People endowed mostly with labor but few other producing assets participate in rural wage labor market and wage income is the main source of income for them the available evidence on rural labor markets in developing countries . However, Shows that the extent of wage employment is limited [Rosenzweig (1988)] and there is a substantial amount of surplus labor in family labor. In many developing countries, Poor households are poor because most of their labor endowment is employed in home based non-mar kited services activities with very low returns, not because they are unemployed. In the Presence of low productivity home production, the poverty impact of agricultural productivity may depend on how allocation of labor from home product to own farming and wage labor changes in response to agricultural productivity growth. The Reallocation of labor from low productivity home production to other market oriented activities has been emphasized as a hallmark of long-run structural change of an economy in the literature [Laitner (2000), Nuera and Kaboski (2012)]. We Provide evidence on the impacts of agricultural Productivity changes on wage, labor supply (hours devoted to market oriented activities), and labor allocation between own farming and wage in agriculture.

Objectives of the Study

There are a few specific objectives of the study as:

- To identify the suffering of the laborers.
- To reveal the discrimination in wage of laborers.
- To remark on agriculture of Northern Bangladesh.

Methodology

A semi-structural questionnaire has been used to fulfill the objectives in interviewing the local laborers. A small scale sample size has been taken from a particular sampling from a focus group discussion (FGD) and face to face interview has been conducted in different districts of Northern Bangladesh to collect primary data. Secondary data has been collected from journals, books and Internet.

Analysis of the Data: As the research work is qualitative in nature. So, collected data has been analysis in qualitative wages. Agricultural Northern Part of Bangladesh is related to flood situation and drought situation. As an impact of climate change. The Northern part of Bangladesh is worst suffering area. The majority of the people are hardcore poor who live under poverty line. Seasonal unemployment under employment, lack of income or low income is regular phenomenon of this area. The gap between rich and poor is extreme. Female workers are much more deprived from wages. Most of them are landless, widows. Some of them have been divorced in regard to poverty and dowry system. They often found in working by contractual agreement. They work in different projects like village roads, culverts, bridges construction under local govt. rural development (LGRD) at times. But originally they are agricultural labor. In a word, they are daily wage laborer. Their living is very difficult due to involvement in different NGO's. They borrow short term loans from such kind of NGO's with high interest rate. This NGO's make their life very painful by different wages. This is another issue of their sufferings. The researcher took into account their life and future. However, an exploratory study of the life style and livelihood of the rural or marginal laborers of Northern Bangladesh has been conducted and got a large number of hidden facts.

Findings: From FGD and face-to-face interview with the respondents who are directly discriminated and deprived laborer of that concerned area, the following have been calculated and identified :

- o One of the respondents named Md. Rafiqul Islam, age 37 who is a contractual laborer receives just tk

- 250 daily. His location is North satetana, Lalmonirhat district.
- o Another day laborer Md. Jalal uddin, age 55 with six family members receives tk. 250 with launch. This amount is very insufficient to bear his family cost.
- o A Female worker named Safirun, age 33 works daily by tk. 150 with no others benefits and tk. 120 with launch. She has no agricultural land.
- o Md. Jounal Abedin, age 50 receives tk. 200 from his daily labor. He is also landless from the Rangpur district
- o A Young day laborer named Md. Ayub Hossain, age 18 gets tk. 200 daily from Rangpur area.
- o Another Respondent Md. Selim, age 38 answered to the question that we gets just tk. 250 daily from agricultural labor.
- o A medium age female worker Mrs. Suria Begum receives just tk. 150 from day long labor.
- o Similarly Mrs. Moriom Begum receives tk. 150 wages. She cannot afford even her family food items as her family members are 7.
- o Another respondents from union chaula, pirgonj, Rangpur, age 40, gets tk. 150 from his day long work. It is very difficult to bear his expenses.
- o A Young female worker named Rashida Begum, get tk. 150 daily wages from the same region.
- o Similarly Mrs. Fatema, age of 40 gets tk. 100 with no in activities.
- o A male worker Safiqul Islam, age 33 receives tk. 200 from daily agricultural labor.
- o Golapi Begum from pirgonj zones Rangpur, said that she receiving just tk. 100.
- o Aisa Khatun, A very poor day labour gets tk. 100 as daily wages from the same area.
- o Mrs. Arkuly Begum, age 35 from Rajshahi Zone said her daily income tk. 100-150 from agricultural land.
- o Another respondent from Rajshahi named Morsada Begum, receives tk. 120 daily from regular agro-land.
- o Md. Nawab Ali, age 30, described his pains that he receives tk. 200 from his daily labor and added he gets it from working in Mango cultivation, Rajshahi.
- o Mrs. Kulara Khatun, from pirgonj, Rangpur receives just tk. 120-150 from different agricultural day labor

Conclusion

The study has been conducted is Northern part of Bangladesh. Its main purpose was to show the scenario of the present wage level of the rural agricultural laborers. It is very sad news that very low wages is provided for day laborer. Even they cannot lead their life getting the wage. There are many things to do for them. A further research may be conducted in this regard. Government of Bangladesh should take all the issues seriously for ensure their basic rights, proper wage to have balanced economic development.

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