



Coping with Crisis: An In-depth Analysis of a Visually Impaired Student's Family in Flood-Prone Char Area

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Abstract : This study explores into the multifaceted challenges faced by families in the flood-prone Char areas, taking Mr. Abdul Quddus and Ms. Jahura Begum's family as a case study in Gaibandha district. Mr. Abdul Quddus, an agriculturist, battles the adverse impacts of river erosion and floods, jeopardizing their homesteads, clean water access, and livelihood. The study explores the socioeconomic struggles, educational disruptions, and coping mechanisms in the face of recurring environmental crises. Furthermore, it sheds light on the unique challenges encountered by daughter Asmani Khatun, a visually impaired student, in absence of the tailored support systems. The findings underscore the urgent need for inclusive education initiatives, improved infrastructure, and targeted interventions to ensure uninterrupted primary education, especially for students with disabilities, in the Char areas.

Keywords: flood-prone areas, Char areas, environmental challenges, socioeconomic struggles, river erosion, livelihood, educational disruptions, coping mechanisms

I. INTRODUCTION

The inhabitants Char areas of Gaibandha district in Bangladesh stand as a testament to the resilience and struggles of communities facing the recurrent challenges of river erosion and floods. This study delves into the complex tapestry of coping mechanisms deployed by families in these flood-prone regions, focusing on the compelling case of a visually impaired student's family.

Our subjects, Mr. Abdul Quddus and Ms. Jahura Begum, residents of Guptamani village in Fazlupur union, Fulchhari Upazila, Gaibandha district, navigate a life intricately intertwined with the ebb and flow of environmental crises. Abdul Quddus, an agriculturist, grapples with the adverse impacts of prolonged water upsurges, resulting in challenges relating to clean water access, homestead security, and livelihood sustainability.

Living in a tin-shed house enclosed by jute-stick, the family's struggle is accentuated by the absence of electricity, mirroring the harsh realities imposed by frequent river erosion and floods. Fazlupur Union, an area susceptible to Jamuna River breaches and annual floods, experiences a perpetual cycle of poverty, manifesting in various forms such as theft, robbery, child labor, child marriage, and post-dependency after disaster.

As the environmental challenges extend to the education system, schools face closures during river bank erosions and floods, leading to increased child labor, scarcity of family food, and disruptions in traditional education systems. Jahura Begum, a mother of three, sheds light on the family's six-month struggle with food scarcity and the absence of benefits relating to Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) or Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) cards. The family's ownership of a single mobile set underscores the broader challenges they face.

The narrative takes a poignant turn with Asmani Khatun, Jahura Begum's visually impaired 10-year-old daughter, navigating the educational landscape. Studying in the 4th standard at Char Kochkhali Government Primary School, Asmani Khatun receives a stipend but confronts disruptions during river breaks and floods. The lack of special initiatives for students lagging behind or those with physically challenged emphasizes the need for an education-friendly environment, ensuring uninterrupted primary education, especially for disabled students.

As the study embark on an in-depth analysis of this visually impaired student's family, our goal is to unravel the intricate coping mechanisms, socioeconomic struggles, and educational hurdles faced by families in flood-prone Char areas. The findings aim to contribute valuable insights for the development of targeted interventions, policies, and support systems that foster resilience and inclusivity in the face of environmental crises.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the flood-prone Char areas of Gaibandha district, the resilient community grapples with multifaceted challenges exacerbated by recurrent river erosion and floods. This study, focusing on the compelling case of a visually impaired

student's family, sheds light on the intricate web of problems faced by families navigating the complexities of environmental crises.

The Char areas, susceptible to frequent river breaches and floods, present a challenging environment for families like Mr. Abdul Quddus and Ms. Jahura Begum. Prolonged water upsurges lead to homestead insecurity, scarcity of clean water, and disruptions in the agricultural livelihood, highlighting the urgent need for sustainable environmental management.

The standard of living in flood-prone regions, as exemplified by the experiences of our subjects, Mr. Abdul Quddus and Ms. Jahura Begum, reflects dire socioeconomic conditions. The absence of basic amenities such as electricity, coupled with the perennial cycle of poverty resulting in theft, child labor, and child marriage, underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions to uplift the living standards of these communities.

Environmental challenges, including river erosion and floods, disrupt the traditional education system in Char areas (James, D. 2023). The closure of schools during these crises leads to increased child labor, scarcity of family food, and challenges in maintaining an uninterrupted educational journey for students like Asmani Khatun. The absence of specialized initiatives for disabled students accentuates the need for inclusive and resilient education policies.

The visually impaired student, Asmani Khatun, represents a larger issue of the absence of tailored support systems for students with disabilities in Char areas. The disruptions during natural calamities, coupled with the lack of attention and supporting materials, contribute to the mental suffering of disabled students, necessitating the creation of an education-friendly environment.

The study navigates the complexities of coping with crises in flood-prone Char areas, it becomes evident that environmental, socioeconomic, and educational challenges are interwoven. Addressing these issues requires a nuanced understanding of the unique struggles faced by families, especially those with disabled members, and calls for targeted interventions, policies, and support systems that foster resilience and inclusivity in the face of environmental adversities.

III. OBJECTIVE OF RESEARCH

This research aims to explore and analyze the multifaceted challenges faced by the Quddus-Jahura family, with a focus on the educational barriers encountered by their daughter, Asmani Khatun. The core objective is to analyze the socioeconomic struggles experienced by families, particularly Mr. Abdul Quddus and Ms. Jahura Begum, in the flood-prone Char areas, considering factors such as poverty, absence of basic amenities, and resulting social issues, and to explore the experiences of visually impaired students, exemplified by Asmani Khatun, during natural calamities and assess the impact on their education, emphasizing the need for specialized support systems. Through these objectives, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics within flood-prone Char areas, with a focus on environmental resilience, socioeconomic struggles, educational disruptions, and the unique challenges faced by disabled students and their families.

IV. METHODS

Utilizing a case study method, an in-depth examination was undertaken to uncover the intricacies of Mr. Abdul Quddus and Ms. Jahura Begum's life, focusing on their strategies for dealing with challenges, socioeconomic factors, and educational journeys (Yin, R.K. 2018). Qualitative insights into the experiences, hurdles, and aspirations concerning Asmani Khatun's education were obtained through interviews with her parents, Mr. Abdul Quddus and Ms. Jahura Begum Khatun. The exploration encompassed their viewpoints on financial limitations, household income, accessibility to educational resources, perceptions of educational quality, support structures, and the impact of Asmani Khatun's speech impediment on her educational path, yielding valuable qualitative information (Sena, B. 2023). In-depth interviews were conducted with the participants, aiming to capture firsthand narratives, perspectives, and encounters related to environmental adversities, family dynamics, and the educational sphere.

V. ASMANI KHATUN'S JOURNEY TO EDUCATION

Meet Mr. Abdul Quddus, a 38-year-old resident of Guptamani village in Fazlupur union, Fulchhari Upazila, Gaibandha district. His wife, Ms. Jahura Begum, aged 35, and their 10-year-old visually impaired daughter, Asmani Khatun, constitute a family confronting the profound challenges of life in a flood-prone Char area.

Abdul Quddus, primarily engaged in agriculture, grapples with a monthly income of only tk. 7,000.00. The constant threat of rising waters in the homesteads has left the Char community struggling for clean water and cattle fodder. To cope, families like Abdul Quddus's are compelled to sell their domestic animals before floods, lacking secure spaces to shelter them. Their dwelling, a modest tin-shed house surrounded by jute-stick, lacks electricity.

Jahura Begum sheds light on the harsh reality of Fazlupur Union, an area perennially affected by Jamuna River breaches and annual floods. The inhabitants endure a perpetual cycle of poverty, manifesting in various distressing forms such as theft, robbery, child labor, child marriage, dowry, polygamy, and post-dependency. The adverse impacts of river erosion and floods lead to yearly displacement, washing away homes and belongings.

The school, a vital institution, faces closures during river bank erosions and floods. This results in heightened child labor, food scarcity for families, and disruptions in the conventional education system. Jahura Begum, a mother of three, narrates the family's struggle with food shortages lasting for approximately six months annually. Unfortunately, they do not benefit from Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) or Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) cards. Their only means of communication is a single mobile set.

Asmani Khatun, the visually impaired daughter, attends Char Kochkhali Government Primary School. Despite facing adversity, she receives a stipend from the school. The family actively engages in teaching, homework assistance, and fostering various talents in their children. However, during river breaks and floods, the challenges intensify. The disruption in living conditions, coupled with the family's preoccupation with essential tasks, accentuates the mental suffering of disabled students like Asmani. The absence of specialized support exacerbates their difficulties.

Jahura Begum emphasizes the urgent need for special initiatives for students lagging behind and those with physical disabilities. She advocates for the creation of education-friendly environments in schools, ensuring uninterrupted primary education, especially for disabled students. This study aims to comprehensively analyze the coping mechanisms, socioeconomic struggles, and educational hurdles faced by families in flood-prone Char areas, providing valuable insights for targeted interventions and policies that foster resilience and inclusivity amid environmental crises.

VI. KEY FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. Abdul Quddus, an agriculturist, faces significant economic challenges with a monthly income of tk. 7,000.00. The community grapples with water upsurge, impacting clean water access and cattle fodder.
2. The family's tin-shed house, surrounded by jute, lacks electricity. Before floods, they are compelled to sell domestic animals due to a lack of secure shelter, affecting their livelihood.
3. Fazlupur Union, affected by Jamuna River breaches, experiences an annual cycle of poverty. River erosion and floods wash away belongings, leading to dire consequences such as theft, child labor, and child marriage.
4. Schools in the area close during river bank erosions and floods, resulting in increased child labor and food scarcity for families. The absence of alternative education systems compounds the challenges.
5. The family, comprising three children, faces food problems for about six months annually. Despite this, they do not benefit from Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) or Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) cards.
6. With only one mobile set in the family, communication and connectivity are limited, reflecting broader challenges faced by families in the Char area.
7. Asmani Khatun, a visually impaired student, faces disruptions during river breaks and floods. Although she attends school regularly and receives a stipend, the lack of special initiatives and supporting materials increases the challenges.
8. During crises, living and feeding of disabled students are disrupted. Family members, preoccupied with essential tasks, struggle to attend to their needs, leading to increased mental suffering.
9. Jahura Begum emphasizes the need for special initiatives for students lagging behind and those with physical disabilities. Creating education-friendly environments is crucial for ensuring uninterrupted primary education.

The study underscores the necessity of targeted interventions, inclusive policies, and support systems to address the multifaceted challenges faced by families in flood-prone Char areas, particularly those with disabled students. The findings suggest opportunities for targeted interventions and policy considerations to address the unique challenges faced by students like Bristy in pursuit of quality education.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Given Prioritize infrastructure development to create secure shelters, mitigating the need to sell domestic animals before floods and ensuring the safety of families during crises.
2. Implement initiatives for sustainable clean water access, addressing the shortage faced by Char area residents due to prolonged water upsurges.
3. Introduce livelihood support programs to assist agriculturists like Abdul Quddus, enhancing economic resilience in the face of environmental challenges.
4. Develop alternative education systems to counter school closures during river bank erosions and floods, preventing the escalation of child labor and ensuring uninterrupted learning.
5. Extend food security programs to families, especially during the six-month period of food scarcity, providing essential support for vulnerable communities.
6. Facilitate access to social welfare benefits, such as Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) or Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) cards, to alleviate economic hardships faced by families in the Char areas.
7. Improve electricity connectivity in households to enhance living conditions and contribute to the overall development of the Char area.

8. Establish special initiatives and support systems for students lagging behind in school and those with physical disabilities, ensuring inclusivity and addressing the unique needs of students like Asmani Khatun.
9. Implement measures to create education-friendly environments in schools, accommodating disabled students and preventing disruptions in primary education during environmental crises.
10. Introduce mental health support programs to address the increased mental suffering of disabled students during river breaks and floods, acknowledging the unique challenges they face.
11. Conduct awareness programs to educate the community on improved grazing seeds, scientific processing, and sustainable agricultural practices, enhancing agricultural productivity.
12. Encourage collaboration among government agencies, international development partners, NGOs, and local representatives to implement multipronged strategies and programs for comprehensive and sustainable development in the Char areas.

Implementing these recommendations collectively will contribute to building resilience and improving the overall well-being of families in flood-prone Char areas, fostering a more sustainable and inclusive future.

VIII. CONCLUSION

In the flood-prone Char areas of Gaibandha district, the life of Mr. Abdul Quddus and Ms. Jahura Begum's family stands as a poignant testament to the multifaceted challenges faced by communities grappling with the perennial threat of river erosion and floods. Abdul Quddus, an agriculturist whose modest income is tethered to the ebb and flow of environmental crises, encapsulates the struggles of families in this region.

The vivid narrative unfolds against the backdrop of a tin-shed house surrounded by jute-stick, symbolizing the resilience of those confronting the absence of clean water, shelter security, and electricity. Fazlupur Union, affected by recurrent Jamuna River breaches, bears witness to an annual cycle of impoverishment, encompassing theft, child labor, and the haunting specters of child marriage and post-dependency.

As the floodwaters rise, so do the challenges for families like Abdul Quddus and Jahura Begum's. School closures amplify child labor, exacerbate food scarcity, and disrupt traditional education systems, underscoring the dire need for alternative educational frameworks in the Char areas.

Jahura Begum's family, enduring six months of food shortages, lacks the benefits of social welfare programs, reflecting the systemic gaps in providing support to vulnerable communities. The single mobile set in their possession reflects the broader connectivity challenges faced by families in these remote regions.

A poignant chapter unfolds with Asmani Khatun, a visually impaired student navigating the educational landscape. Despite her resilience and regular attendance at Char Kochkhali Government Primary School, the lack of special initiatives for students with disabilities reveals the existing gaps in creating an inclusive educational environment.

The challenges extend beyond education; during river breaks and floods, the mental suffering of disabled students amplifies, underscoring the urgent need for targeted support systems and materials. Jahura Begum's plea for an education-friendly environment resonates as a call to action to ensure that primary education remains uninterrupted, especially for students with disabilities.

In conclusion, the in-depth analysis of this visually impaired student's family illuminates the intricate web of coping mechanisms, socioeconomic struggles, and educational hurdles prevalent in flood-prone Char areas. The findings propel us toward a collective responsibility to implement targeted interventions, policies, and support systems. By fostering resilience and inclusivity, the study can strive for a future where families in these areas not only cope with crises but thrive despite them.

IX. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

1. Thankful to the family Mr. Abdul Quddus and Ms. Jahura Begum's, Gaibandha and
2. Grateful to Char Kochkhali Government Primary School, Fulchhari, Gaibandha.

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