

**Evaluation of the 'Cluster Village' Projects: A Case Study on Four Cluster Village
Projects of Nilphamari District**

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Abstract

Access to land is very important for socially and economically disadvantaged people, from the countries where agriculture is the main source of employment to improve their livelihoods. It brings an opportunity for producing their livelihoods reducing extreme poverty. Land management is a tool being employed by the governments around the world to contribute in this respect. In Bangladesh guchchogram/ cluster village projects are done for rehabilitating rural land less people to reduce poverty. Successful implementation of such projects will help in reducing poverty, migration and improving socio economic condition of rural poor. This paper focuses on evaluating cluster village projects whether they are improving the socio economic status of the people.

Introduction

The number of landless people Bangladesh is growing steadily because of consequent natural disasters like -flood, river erosion, cyclone, etc., poverty, and legal disputes. According to BBS 2010, the Agriculture Census, 2008 revealed that out of 28.67 million households, 4.48 million or 15.62% were absolutely landless (Byron, 2009). Bangladesh is one of the very highly disaster-prone countries in the world. The current rate of increase in landlessness is 12.84 % in rural areas against 10.18% and 8.67% in 1996 and 1983-84 respectably (BBS, 2010, Agriculture Census 2008). Poverty rate for the landless was 57 percent in 2005 compared to 24 percent for small landowners and 13 percent for medium/large landowners (HIES, 2002, 2005)). The phenomenon of “landless farmers” migrating to urban centers is increasingly reported (Rahman and Manprasert 2006; IRIN 2010). In Bangladesh, current urban population growth rate is around 4% per year (World Bank 2016). In

Bangladesh, particularly the 25 percent of the population below the lower poverty line consume at very low level (HIES, 2005). Landlessness, homelessness, adverse person-to-land ratio, etc. are the push factors to rural-urban-migration. Poverty ignited from landlessness and lack of wage-earning opportunities in rural areas promotes rushing from rural to urban areas. This badly influences social environment in urban areas especially by increasing slums and informal settlements. This increasing landless families are rushing towards urban areas for livelihoods and creating extra pressure on the major cities. So, the policy makers always think of relocation of such shelter less people and bring them mainstream of the society. The Cluster village project is such a project to rehabilitate landless destitute poor families on khas land. Already about 1761 cluster villages have been established, and more will be done within 2025 (MoL, 2018). It is important to evaluate the rehabilitation projects weather they contribute in socio-economic developments in Nilphamari district or not. This study tries to find at what extent these projects can fulfill their theoretical premise and uplift the socio economic condition of rootless families. The study will also find what are the negative factors, and potentials and constraints.

Objectives and Methodology

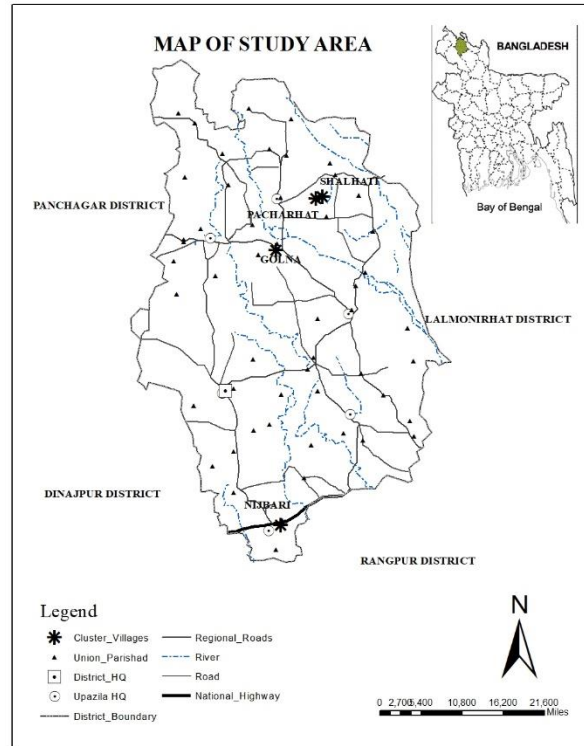
The goal of this study is to evaluate how much socio-economic changes have been occurred to the people due to initiating of these projects, thus the objectives were framed such as; to evaluate these projects in socio- economic perspectives and provide some recommendations for ensuring effectiveness of the selected projects. This research was carried out on the basis of exploratory research design. For collecting primary data, individual questionnaire survey and Focused Group discussion has been done. According to the Yamane sampling, 31, 28, 17 and 12 households of Pacharhat, Nijbari, Golna, and Shalhati communities respectably were surveyed. In FGD, both the male and female residents of various age were present. Concerned officials of the regional office of

Guchchogram Project and BRDB office were interviewed. Earlier researches both published and unpublished, and govt. and autonomous publications were used as the secondary sources.

Study Area

According to CARE SDU report, 2003, total amount of Khas land in Nilphamari district is 19,508 acres, where agricultural Khas land is 18,071 acres and non-agricultural Khas land is 1,437 acres and no. of landless household is 50,952 (BBS 2010).

4 cluster villages located in 4 different Upazila of Nilphamari district have been chosen, namely- i) Pacharhat Adarshgram at Dimla, ii) Nijbari Guchchogram at Saidpur, iii) Golna Guchchogram at Domar, iv) Shalhati Guchchogram at Dimla.



Source: LGED, modified by authors, 2017.



Fig 2: Pocharhat cluster



Fig 3: Golna cluster



Fig 4: Nijbari cluster village

Source: Field Survey 2017

Evaluation of the Rehabilitation Projects in Socio Economic Perspectives

Demography

In the first three communities, the landless people were rehabilitated in two steps. At Pacharhat, first 50 families were rehabilitated in 2000 and then 50 families in 2002. Also, at Nijbari Guchchhogram firstly 70 families in 2009 and after four years more 10 families were rehabilitate. At Golna Guchchhogram, 30 and 30 families were relocated in 2009 and 2010 respectably. There should be 60 families, but at present there live only 26. At Shalhati Guchchhogram the rehabilitation project had been completed in 2014 for only 40 families. But at present there live only 14 families. More than 50% households of Golna and Shalhati communities left their community.

Family Type of the households of these communities are-

Nijbari	Before relocation: 42% single & 57% joint.	After: 75% single & 25% joint
Pacharhat	Before relocation: 37% single & 63% joint.	After: 68% single & 32% joint
Golna	Before relocation: 82% single & 17% joint.	After: 94% single & 6% joint
Shalhati	Before relocation: 58% single & 42% joint.	After: 92% single & 8% joint

Housing Condition and people's perception

At Pacharhat Adarshagram, first relocated 50 families were given 6 dec. the secondly relocated 50 families were given 8 dec. land. All of them got a two-room home which dimension was more than about 11' x 10' and a kitchen and a toilet. All the homes had identical design and structure from the govt. At Nijbari Guchchhogram, all the 80 families were given a home on 3.25 dec. land, but at Golna and Shalhati Guchchhogram all the households were given home on 4 dec. land. In the home there were two attached rooms (11' x 10'), a kitchen, a veranda, a toilet, and the rest area was considered as yard (field survey, 2017). All the homes had



Fig 5: Housing deteriorating due to sandy soil in Shalhati

identical design and structure from the govt. At pacharhat, almost all the govt. provided homes collapsed within 10 years. The respondents repaired their homes and added extra rooms within the fixed land area. At Nijbari, about 85% homes started to distort after 3-4 years. Almost all the households repaired their homes at their own cost. More than 90% families had built additional rooms. At Golna and Shalhati guchchogram, more than 75% homes started to distort within 1-2 years. Almost 30% families have built additional rooms. Many couldn't build extra room for the lack of money and some became discouraged for the sandy soil, even all they need extra room. The new rooms were made of bamboo, tin, or clay. Households who couldn't make additional room, repaired their home according to their ability. Besides additional room, they built tin or bamboo shed for multiple usage; sitting, tailoring, keeping livestock and poultry, etc.

Table 1: Number of additional rooms constructed by the households in percentage

No. of Additional rooms constructed	Households in %			
	Pacharhat	Nijbari	Golna	Shalhati
1 room		34	12	60
2 rooms	20	40	26	20
3 or more rooms	67	10		10
Only tin/ bamboo shed	30	16	63	70

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Table 2: Satisfaction level on housing

Satisfaction Level	Pacharhat	Nijbari	Golna	Shalhati
Satisfied	73%	82%	18%	25%
Dissatisfied	17%	4%	50%	58%
No Comment	10%	14%	32%	17%

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Satisfaction level on housing condition were higher in both Pacharhat and Nijbari communities. The significant reason behind this was that, the people could bear the cost of repairing and modifying their homes. Only a few percent households were dissatisfied as the 110sq feet room weren't sufficient for their joint family. But at the Golna and shallhati, more than 50% households were dissatisfied. Besides the reason of tiny room and small homestead area, structures on sandy

soil, very poor and low quality of building materials, location on flood prone area, were the prime factor for dissatisfaction and low income. Due to poverty, they could hardly bear the repairing and modifying cost.

Income Level

There occurred a notable change in monthly income after relocation in consideration of monthly income in before- relocation. Some had changed their occupation after relocation, where the most hadn't, who were relocated from the adjacent areas. Changes in family size after relocation is one significant cause for the change of family income and occupation.

Table 3: Monthly income in US \$.

	Pacharhat		Nijbari		Golna		Shalhati	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Minimum	25.00	90.00	45	80	50	50	50	50
Maximum	60.00	150.00	300	325	150	135	110	135
Mean	39	127	114	135	107	103	87	122

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Table 4: The poverty condition in the study area (in % of household)

	Pacharhat		Nijbari		Golna		Shalhati	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
<1.9\$ (Extreme poor)	13	0	14	0	18	12	25	9
2-4\$ (Lower poor)	53	17	75	86	29	76	75	58
4-10\$ (poor)	34	63	0	0	53	12	0	33
11-20\$ (Middle class)	0	20	11	14	0	0	0	0

Source: Field Survey, 2018

In every project area percentage of extreme poor household has been reduced and in two project area it totally removed. In Pacharhat cluster village 20% households become middle class people after the land reform project. There is positive impacts on their income though household's opinion

on their income level change differed from community to community due to various reasons like distance of nearest working place, availability of land for agriculture etc.



Fig 6: People left home for unavailability of livelihood in Golna



Fig 7: People left home for unavailability of livelihood in Shalhati

In figure 6 and 7 it has been seen that due to unavailability of job opportunity, unproductive land pull the residence to other places.

Table 5: The change in income level of households (in %)

Income level	Communities			
	Pacharhat	Nijbari	Golna	Shalhati
Increased	87%	100%	40%	25%
Decreased	No	No	30%	17%
no change	13%	0%	30%	58%

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Relocation put a significant impact on income and income range of the households. There occurred a notable progress in monthly income after relocation at Pacharhat and Nijbari. Some people had changed their occupation after relocation. After relocation maximum people were engaged in multiple occupations. Two communities, Golna and Shalhati, mixed impacts occurred. At Golna income decreased for 30% families after relocation due to changes in working place and working opportunity. Amongst the 3 extreme poor families only 1 improved after relocation but others remained extreme poor. At Shalhati Guchchhogram, there is a little change in economic condition after relocation. Many people had changed their occupation. After relocation income significantly

increased only for the 40% families. About 10% extreme poor families were found after relocation. Even after getting relocation plot about half of the relocated people rushed towards urban areas for income opportunity.

Employment Sectors

Earlier work in Bangladesh shows that agricultural wage laborers are typically the poorest occupational group (Hossain, 1995); There occurred significant change in income patterns of the male family members (head of the house), who are living in the village. In all the villages, dependency on agriculture had been decreased. Employment decreased in agriculture as many people rushed towards Dhaka and other urban areas, and some started day laboring. The households, whose income increased, had at least one member working in urban or industrial areas

Table 6: Households (in %) dependency on various earning sources

Projects	Agriculture		Non- agriculture		Labor in outside		Labor in locality	
	Before	After	Before %	After	Before	After	Before	After
Pacharhat	47	27	13	30	10	13	90	87
Nijbari	17	5	21	43	14	7	85	93
Golna	45	12	45	70	7	20	93	80
Shalhati	75	40	30	65	30	40	70	60

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Most of people earned through multiple occupations; sometimes they do rickshaw pulling, do farming or day laboring. They couldn't cultivate land all over the year, most of them had no agricultural land. They had to borrow others' land in terms of condition. So, their income patterns vary from season to season. Laboring in local areas increased only at Nijbari because it is located besides industrial zone, again diversified occupations also found there.

Training on Income Generating Activities (IGA)

The training for men on income generating activities (IGA) and social awareness is to be done in 3 steps through total 8 days. There must be a gap of 2 month between two each step. We can see that the relocated men were trained on only a very few topics and the most of the people are not satisfied on the training. They claimed that the training was done in a very short time and finished quickly. There was a little gap between the training steps.

Table 7: IGA training occurred in study area

Community	training topics	Days	Gap between step
Pacharhat	Poultry and cattle farming	2	No gap
Nijbari	vegetable gardening, fisheries and poultry farming	7	2
Golna	Fisheries and livestock farming	2	1
Shalhathi	Fisheries, livestock farming and home gardening	2	No gap

Source: Field Survey, 2018

The relocated men were trained on only a very few general topics and the most of the people are not satisfied on the training. There were no effective training on any important subject like non-farming activities. The trainings were done in a very short time and finished quickly. There were little gaps between the training steps. Only at Nijbari, 20 women got training on tailoring for 2 months, and at Pacharhat about 20% women got tailoring training for a week. At Golna, about only 5 women got tailoring training. But, at Shalhathi there were no such training.

Table 8: Respondents opinion on IGA trainings

Public Opinion	Communities			
	Pacharhat	Nijbari	Golna	Shalhathi
Satisfied	17%	11%	0%	0%
Dis-satisfied	67%	57%	81%	70%
No Comment	16%	32%	19%	30%

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Micro Credit Loans Facilities

Besides IGA training, all the households were provided micro-credit loan for self-employment and developing living condition. Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) had been given the responsibility of this work. The relocated people got only 7000- 10000 taka loan with interest. People could not run any livelihood project by this little amount of money, where about 50% people of Golna and Shalhathi could not repay the loans due to poverty. Due to isolation and remote location, NGOs and financial organizations don't come to such communities. Thus, the families can't get enough financial help. Most of the families borrow from local moneylenders on too much higher interest rate. People claimed that local authorities hardly provide them govt. financial support like widow allowance, adult allowance etc. as they live in govt. land.

Table 9: Micro financial service opportunities-

Community	Widow allowance	Adult allowance	FFW	VGF	NGO
Pacharhat	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Nijbari	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES
Golna	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Shalhathi	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Food Security

In a survey conducted by DPHE in 1998-99 in collaboration with the British Geological Survey and Mott MacDonald Limited, Nilphamari was found in the list of the least affected districts (Abedin and 2013). The Bangladesh standard for iron in drinking water is 0.3 - 1.0 mg/L. According to Bangladesh National Drinking Water Quality Survey, 2009, there are some places in Domar, Dimla, Saidpur Upozilla, contaminated with iron (Fe) exceeding .3 and 1.0 mg/L, where Bangladesh standard is 0.3- 1.0 mg/L.

Table 10: Households (in %) on food security levels of the communities

Food options	Pacharhat		Nijbari		Golna		Shalhati	
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Rice production	37	47	14	22	18	6	30	10
Vegetable gardening	17	27	43	22	24	0	20	10
Fruit tree	30	47	21	14	24	0	30	0
Safe drinking water	100	36	100	64	35	29	40	50
Poultry	46	47	54	36	41	18	50	30
Livestock	64	47	29	18	35	12	40	40

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Except Nijbari, in the other three cluster village people cannot cultivate due to soil quality. In golna soil is fragile and sandy, in shalhati soil is totally sandy and have not enough space for gardening. Rice production was seasonal; the households have to rent others land. Here safe water is counted without considering iron (Fe) contamination. Both



Fig 8: vegetable gardening at Nijbari

at Golna and shalhati, before relocation some families jointly installed deep tube well in their previous houses. It was an easy source of safe drinking water. After relocation, joint families separated and many single families can't bear the cost of installing personal tube well in this sandy soil. Contamination of iron (Fe) is also a common problem here.

Distance to the nearest community facilities

Due to locational disadvantages, many households hardly get facilities and deprived of opportunities for developing their status. Sometimes long distance discouraged people of receiving better services. Education is a key determinant of wage rates and household income in both HIES 2000 and 2005 (Al-Samarrai, 2007). Due to long distance children's are discouraged to go for higher education after completing primary level.

Table 11: Distance of various service centers from the selected communities

Service centers	Distance of the nearest one (km)			
	Pacharhat	Nijbari	Golna	Shalhathi
Primary school	.5	.5	1	1.5
High school	10	3.5	2	6
Village clinic	4.5	4	7	6
Hospital	10	5	15	12
Police station	10	4	15	12
Post office	4.5	4	2	6
Bazar	4	.1	1	5.5
Financial offices	10	4	7	12
Nearest town	10	4	15	12

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Conflicts Among Neighbors

There were many reasons for conflicts among the neighbors. Many respondents answered single reason for conflict, where some answered multiple reasons.

Table 12: The reasons of conflicts (where one household might show multiple reasons)

	Reasons of conflicts (in %)				
	Waste management	Tubewell & washroom	Used water management	Poultry & livestock	Others
Pacharhat	27	57	10	27	9
Nijbari	20	65	18	25	6
Golna	30	60	0	20	23
Shalhathi	10	40	30	0	30

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Conflicts mainly occur for tubewell & washroom sharing. Immediately after relocation, as multiple families used only 1 tube well (installed by the project), in some cases, the sharing family number vary from 8 to 12. 10 tube wells for 80- 100 families including about 400 persons was pathetic, especially embarrassing situation for the women.

Availability of Sanitation Facilities

All the household families were provided with a personal toilet (pit latrine) by govt., typically about 7 feet deep and the rings were made of cement concrete, and the surrounding wall is made

of tin. Almost 65% toilets were damaged within 5 years due to poor materials and weak construction.

Table 13: Statistics of households having toilet facilities

	Pacharhat		Nijbari		Golna		Shalhati	
	Before	Present	Before	Present	Before	Present	Before	Present
Households having personal latrine	20%	97%	33%	100%	29%	68%	30%	50%

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Sanitation condition significantly developed in first two communities. In the other communities the situation is not satisfied due to poverty and lack in knowledge.

Education Facility

The educational facilities within or near the communities were somewhat dissatisfying. Again, poverty was a vital obstacle for education. Only a few could study after class-v. In some families, all the children were deprived of basic education due to poverty. There were many families, where at least one child can't go to school due to poverty, again, in many families at least one child drops out after class-v.

Table 14: A short statistic of households dropping out from education

Community	Dropped out After Class-V	Not Going to School
Pacharhat	40.00%	20.00%
Nijbari	25.00%	10.71%
Golna	43.75%	18.75%
Shalhati	40.00%	20.00%

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Rate of deprivation from education is higher at Golna and Shalhati because of poverty and lack of employment.

Conclusion & Recommendation

The cluster village projects is contributing significantly to provide shelter to the landless families. But, there need of some necessary supports to the beneficiaries for increasing their livelihood security. As govt. wants to bring them to the mainstream societies, there are lacking in some strategies like- selection of place, homestead area, employment opportunities, vocational training, supervision etc. Due to corruption in implementing and creating such villages, the theoretical objectives have become difficult to achieve. The newer proposed cluster villages should be planned in a way in which the priority setting should be based on income generation rather than only housing facility. The findings of the study will help in further developing of the landless people and future relocation projects.

This study has tried to evaluate what extent and how much socio-economic condition changed in the selected cluster villages. Again, another objective of this study is to provide necessary guidelines for the perfectiveness of this projects. Only a few communities provide the beneficiaries with potentiality for income generation, where the remote communities can't provide. The following suggestions and ideas are resulted from the study of the research can be executed to ensure better output from the projects. Recommendations have been given on existing state-led approach-

- Location is an important fact for income and other livelihoods. The rootless people should be relocated near economic zone or urban area, so that they can get easily better employment, as well as educational facilities, better health care, and other livelihoods.
- The relocated families should be provided with more effective and better IGA and vocational training. Only 7 days training is not enough for these illiterate people.

- Strong regular monitoring by local administration is needed to check up their regular socio-economic condition up to 5-10 years. Such monitoring will help to reduce various constraints and corruption in the communities.
- In remote areas, where there is little scope for better income, the households should be provided larger amount of homestead land, so that they can earn by small industries or home gardening.
- In the remote and rural areas, the rootless and landless families should be provided cultivable land along with homestead land. Then most of the families will not shift to urban areas for employment.
- Checking the levels of arsenic and iron contamination should be measured according to Bangladeshi standard before installing tube wells, as well as selecting project location.
- When the provided homestead land will be too much little or less than 4 dec., strategic housing type can be followed. Such as- two storied houses (using tin, and RCC pillar) instead of traditional one storied house. In such strategic houses, joint families with a large number of members can easily accommodate in one home.
- They should be provided with necessary utilities like electricity, better road connection, etc. If they have electricity, they can build small cottage industries, launch small businesses easily, or create newer profession.
- Selecting families to be relocated without corruption and nepotism so that no solvent family can't get plot.
- Providing adult allowance card, widow card, and VGF and FFW opportunities.
- Relocation besides previous location with income generation opportunities. Such idea was collected from the recent relocation by Delhi Development Authority.
- Increase awareness and provide basic education can help them uplifting their condition.

- Corruption must be checked during implementation and relocation.
- There needs a provision so that the president and secretary of such community must be responsible to the community dwellers for his management.
- Review of the theoretical premise of such project's accordance with present economic condition of the country.

The cluster village projects is contributing significantly to provide shelter to the landless families. But, there need of some necessary supports to the beneficiaries for increasing their livelihood security. As govt. wants to bring them to the mainstream societies, there are lacking in some strategies like- selection of place, homestead area, employment opportunities, vocational training, supervision etc. Due to corruption in implementing and creating such villages, the theoretical objectives have become difficult to achieve. The newer proposed cluster villages should be planned in a way in which the priority setting should be based on income generation rather than only housing facility. The findings of the study will help in further developing of the landless people and future relocation projects.

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