

Draft Report

Assessing the situation of poverty and hunger-related violation of human rights in Bangladesh

UBINIG (Policy Research for Development Alternative)



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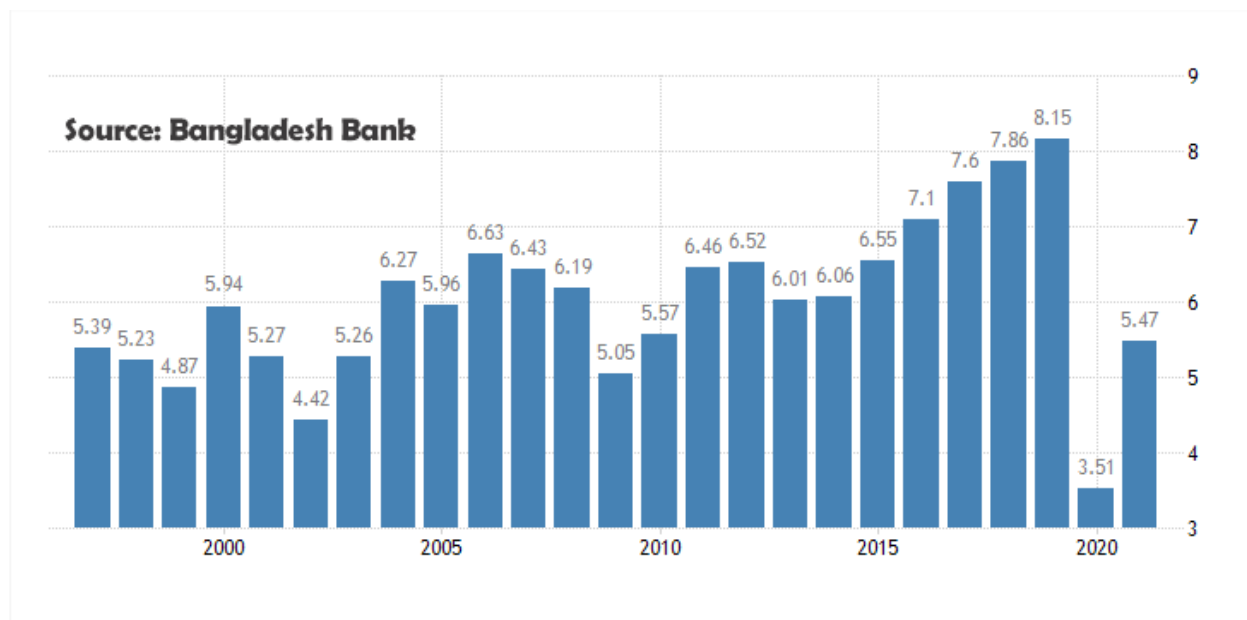
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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is set to graduate to a lower-middle-income country by 2024 from the status of a least developed country. The country has attained the World Bank's lower-middle-income status in 2015 with a GNI per capita of \$1,190, which grew to \$1,750 in 2018. Since 2005, Bangladesh has been officially enjoyed consistent annual GDP growth of over 6% although the reliability of national data is difficult to ascertain. According to [World Bank prediction](#), the COVID-19 global pandemic has slowed down growth since 2020 (Bank, 2021).



Statistics are political tools. Therefore, the concrete meaning of GDP growth in the real life of the people is difficult to ascertain by numbers. Translating numbers into real-life situations is a challenging task. Such tasks have implications for assessing the human rights situation in Bangladesh. While issues related to the civil and political rights of the people of Bangladesh have attained critical visibility at the international level, the economic, social, and cultural rights have remained conspicuously ignored. Meaningful assessment from the human rights perspective of common concerns such as the right to food, health, shelter, and education is still a major area that requires attention. Amid massive corruption and mismanagement of the economy, the top 1 percent is owning 16.3% percent of the country's total national income¹. It indicates the inadequacy of the national income data for all the people of the country.

¹ 1% of Bangladesh's population holds 16.3% of national income: Report, Daily Star, 9 December, 2021 <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/inequality-increasing-2913046>

Bangladesh had been dependent on foreign aid. Despite the rhetoric of the free market development policy has often been manipulated by the multilateral and bilateral institutions. The multilateral institutions ignore massive corruption and mismanagement of the economy. The persistent structural bias to the export sector ignores the internal articulation of the national economy. The export production zones exist as ‘pockets’, disarticulated from the total economy, particularly from agriculture and rural economy. Systematic marginalization and the pauperization of the vast agrarian rural life become necessary to constantly release cheap labor and replenish the ‘industrial reserve army’ to be sold in the labor market. Livelihood options are limited and wages are kept low to remain competitive in the international market. The desperate social and economic situation of the poor strikingly manifests when youths take great risks to migrate to other countries for mere biological survival. Since the structural adjustment policies in the 80s and the continuation of neo-liberal injunctions and policy impositions, Bangladesh has been increasingly reduced into a geographical source for cheap labor, both for the domestic and international labor market. The country is also an exporter of cheap commodities, eg., ready-made garments to rich countries. Much of Bangladesh’s economic growth continues to be driven by exports from the \$28.0 billion ready-made garments (RMG) industry and the continued remittance inflows from expatriate labor, which reached a record \$18.2 billion in fiscal year (FY) 2019-20.

In this context, Bangladesh as a member country of the United Nations (UN) is following the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 to reduce poverty, eradicate widespread hunger, and address other global challenges of development. In SDG1 it is claimed that the proportion of the population living below the national upper poverty line has consistently declined from 24.3 percent in 2016 to 20.5 percent in 2019. The population below the lower poverty line has also decreased to 10.5 percent.

The SDG2 is about ending hunger and improving malnutrition. According to the government reports, the percentage of the undernourished population has gone down to 14.7 percent in 2017 from 16.4 percent in 2016. The indicators of malnutrition are stunting, wasting and anemia among children under 5 years and women of reproductive age. Although the government claims in the Progress Report (2020)² of significant achievement in improving the nutrition situation, about 35% of the population are food insecure, and 10% of ever-married women are moderately or severely food insecure. The prevalence of malnutrition remains a serious public concern for the country.

Sustainable development goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 1 & SDG2, will not be fully achievable by 2030, leaving out SDG 16 which focuses on inclusive societies, democracy, strong

² GOB, Sustainable Development Goals Bangladesh Progress Report, 2020, General Economic Division, SDGs Publication No. # 23 by GED Planning Commission, Ministry of Planning, June 2020

institutions, justice, and rule of law. Growing economic inequality, non-functioning democracy, the weakening of the major institutions, and non-inclusive growth hinder the achievement of SDG 16. The violence against women (VAW), intentional homicide, lack of safety of movement, human trafficking, bribery to a government official to receive services, non-implementation of the Right to Information Act, 2009, absence of independent functioning of the National Human Rights Commission, etc. are challenges faced by the country. The impartial actions of the law-enforcing agencies and a properly functioning accountability mechanism are not in place. An effective judicial system is also a key challenge in achieving the relevant SDG targets.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Conventional methodology and macro data on poverty, hunger, and malnutrition fall short in providing a picture of concrete reality that requires policy attention. An abstract total picture in terms of number is limited and fails to show the concrete manifestations of poverty and hunger. The quantitative data also is limited to understanding the situation under which the poor people are struggling for their survival. It does not indicate whether the opportunities open to them for earning income and to have access to food are enough and will be sustainable. The COVID -19 pandemic and its effects on health and livelihood have real impacts which need to be assessed as well. Income inequality has also increased among the people.

Access to food is not only a matter of having the purchasing power but also the availability of the food in the market at a price affordable to the people. The quality of food in terms of nutrition is an important measure of access to food. It is not enough to see the number of people who remain hungry (i.e. without food) but to get an estimate of the number of people having inadequate food in terms of quantity and quality. The measures taken for addressing malnutrition are not based on the food produced by the farmers but on the industrial fortification of a few food items that are imported or produced by corporations.

Income inequality and wealth inequality are prevailing in the country and have been increasing even during the pandemic. Income inequality is widening. The political power is concentrated and the opposition political parties and voices are absent. The lack of accountability of the institutions and lack of governance has been of concern. The poor and the marginalized have little access to services from government institutions.

In this study, the main problems addressed are:

1. The extent and nature of poverty among different income groups and different occupational groups
2. The effects on income in different income groups during the COVID pandemic
3. The access to food in terms of quantity and quality by income and occupational groups
4. The situation of poverty within households by gender differences

5. The situation of food accessibility within households by gender differences
6. The number of people under a social protection program
7. The proportion of income inequality in the area
8. The composition of food among the poor and other social groups.
9. The access to food produced by the farmers and by import.

USAGE OF COLLECTED DATA & COLLABORATION

In collaboration with the Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) the collected data will be used for:

- i) Doing advocacy purposes focusing on the food adequacy aspects in Bangladesh;
- ii) Examining and assessing the measures on the affordability of food for the people in the light of Goal-16 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- iii) Making Submissions to the public institutions of Bangladesh about the problems involving the people's affordability of food;
- iv) Using the findings of the activities for larger studies and advocacy on food affordability issues.

OBJECTIVE

The precise objective of the study is to assess the concrete situation of poverty, income, and access to food in light of Sustainable Development goals 1 and 2 related to human rights and accountable institutions focusing on goal 16.

SECTION 2: METHODOLOGY

This is a participatory assessment of the situation with the people in different socio-economic strata. A quantitative survey and qualitative assessment were conducted.

Three different areas were selected to represent the diversity of the population. These are

1. Sadar Upazila (Pourashova) in Tangail is closer to Dhaka and has a diversity of income groups and occupational categories. It also has a large group of overseas workers and returnees after COVID-19.
2. Kumarkhali Pourashova is in the Kushtia district. It is more of a combination of the rural and semi-urban populations.
3. A slum is Dhaka with more daily wage workers, rickshaw pullers, domestic help, and small businesses.

Area description

Tangail Sadar Paurashova

Tangail Sadar Paurashova of Tangail district has 18 wards with 32 square kilometer areas. The total population is 250083 with 82671 men and 167412 are women. The main occupations are government and private service holders, wage labor, rickshaw pullers, retailers, street food vendors, etc. There are two weekly (two days in a week) hats and two regular bazaars in the Pauroshova. Total academic institutions included government college 3, Non-government college 6, High school 2, Primary school 36, Non-government school 30, government vocational institutes 2, Non-government vocational institutes 14, and orphanages 2. Total religious institutes including mosque, mandir, and madrasah are 37. The Paurahava has 2508km of *Pakka* (concrete) road and 121 km of *Kacha* (plain) road.

Kumarkhali Paurashova

Kumarkhali Paurashova of Kushtia district has 9 wards. This is an integration of handloom and agriculture areas of the rural and semi-urban population. Total area is 10.5 Square kilometers. Total population are 21914 including 11079 women and 10835 men. The Paurashava have two regular markets and two weekly hat. There are 22 academic institutions including one Degree college, one women college, four high schools, ten primary schools, four madrasa and two library. There are 21 mosque, 10 temple, 3 graveyard and a crematorium in the Kumarkhali Parroshova. The Parashova have 80 kilometer of pavement road and 20 kilometer of kacha road.

Mohammadpur Thana / Municipalities (Dhaka Metropolitan)

Mohammadpur Thana / Municipalities (Dhaka Metropolitan) has 6 wards. The study was conducted in the slum areas of each of 6 wards.

Mohammadpur Thana (Dhaka metropolitan) area have 7.44 sq km. Population Total 241343; male 133557, female 107786; Muslim 233580, Hindu 6366, Buddhist 1148, Christian 213 and others 36.

There are diversified income groups and occupational categories including wage earners, street food vendors, rickshaw pullers, domestic workers, transport workers and RMG workers.

Total roads: 247.08 km. All the mahallas of the thana are under an electrification network. However, 97% of the dwelling households have access to electricity. Sources of drinking water Tube-well 13%, pond 0.04%, tap 85.50%, and others 1.04%. Sanitation 87.48% of dwelling households use sanitary latrines and 12% of dwelling households use non-sanitary latrines; 0.48% of households do not have latrine facilities.

Sample size

Table 1: sample size of the three study areas

Sample/Areas	Number
Kumarkhali, Kushtia	108
Sadar, Tangail	103
Muhammedpur, Dhaka	92
Total	303

Case studies: The qualitative information has been collected for the case studies of 30 families of three research areas. A set of questionnaires and indicators have been generated to assess the situation with intensive information on the income, expenditure, food support, food consumption, family essential services, nutrition, social security, state services, allowances, and related other issues. The case studies were very useful for understanding food adequacy, measures on the affordability of food, social security intensively for future course of action, and policy influence.

Key Informant Interviews (KII): There are 10 KII interviews from the respective government departments for understanding their role and the situation of their responsibilities of poverty, income, and access to food in connection to SDG 1, 2, and 16. The interviews have been taken from the Local Government Division, Department of Social Welfare, Department of Women and Children Affairs, and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Table 2: List of KII interviewees in the three areas

Area	Name, designation, institution	Reasons for interviewing
Kumarkhali, Kushtia	Name: Ferdouse Naznin Sumana Designation: Upazila Women Affairs Officer, Kumarkhali Institution: Department of Women Affairs	The Department of Women affairs is an important institution for making prosperity and betterment of the country. It should ensure the welfare and social safety as well as legal and social rights of women. The information about the socially vulnerable women getting support from the Department of Women Affairs was available.
	Name: Muhammad Ali	The Department of social welfare under the Ministry of Social Welfare (MoSW),

<p>Designation: Social Welfare Officer, Kumarkhali</p> <p>Institutions: Department of Social Welfare</p>	<p>has been implementing several multidimensional programmes like socio-economic development and protection of rights besides social safety-net. The information on the scenario for the destitute, poor, orphan, senior citizens, widows, vulnerable children, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and marginalized people in his working Upazila was available</p>
<p>Name: S M Rafiqul Islam</p> <p>Designation: Panel Mayor</p> <p>Institution: Kumarkhali Municipality</p>	<p>The Mayor serves as the chief executive officer and presides at the commission meetings. He may vote in case of a tie and has veto authority. His interview is contributing for the overall health, welfare and safety of the city as a whole.</p>
<p>Name: Md. Feroz Ahmed</p> <p>Designation: Upazila Rural Development Officer, Kumarkhali</p> <p>Institutions: Department of Rural Development</p>	<p>Department of Rural Development acting to improve the quality of life of the people by strengthening local government system and implementing socio-economic and infrastructural development activities. The Department also supporting rural stakeholders for income-generating in relation to developing entrepreneurship.</p>
<p>Name: Md. Jahirul Alam</p> <p>Designation: District Food Inspector</p> <p>Institution: Department of Food</p>	<p>Department of Food is under the Ministry of Food mainly working for providing food support and creating awareness of food safety. The information on the food support and related other involvement of the Department was available.</p>

<p>Sadar, Tangail</p>	<p>Name: Md Shah Alam Designation: Deputy Director Institution: Department of Social Welfare</p>	<p>The Department of Social Welfare (MoSW), has been implementing several multidimensional programmes like socio-economic development and protection of rights besides social safety-net. The information on the scenario for the destitute, poor, orphan, senior citizens, widows, vulnerable children, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and marginalized people was available.</p>
	<p>Name: Kanak Kanti Debnath Designation: District Food Controller, Tangail Institution: Department of Food</p>	<p>Department of Food is under the Ministry of Food mainly working for providing food support and creating awareness of food safety. Information on the food support and related involvement of the Department was available.</p>
	<p>Name: Ulka Begum Designation: Ward Commissioner Institution: Tangail City Corporation</p>	<p>A commissioner is responsible for representing the concerns of the ward from which she was elected. In addition, commissioners have a responsibility for the health, welfare and safety of the city as a whole. The information about the situation in the ward areas regarding different allowances and support for the poor and vulnerable peoples.</p>
<p>Mohamadpur Dhaka</p>	<p>Name: Nazneen Aktaree Designation: Programme officer Institution: Department of Women Affairs</p>	<p>The Department of Women Affairs is an important institution for women's development. It should ensure the welfare and social safety as well as the legal and social rights of women. Information was available about the</p>

	situation and support from the department for women and entrepreneurship package.
<p>Name: Prof. Dr. Alim</p> <p>Designation: Member, Bangladesh Food Safety Authority (BFSA)</p> <p>Institution: Ministry of Food</p>	<p>BFSA, as a body representing the public interest, is a stakeholder which can provide a valuable opinion for the policy advocacy. BFSA with its district and upazila offices creating awareness of stakeholders of food safety and nutrition and also provides food support among poor and marginalized people.</p>

Period:

The survey was conducted on 23 December 2021 and finished on 06 January 2021. The data collection took about 15 days for 6 research associates and 3 supervisors.

Case Studies and KII: February 2022

The case studies were collected by the supervisors in the three areas.

Data compilation & report writing: February 2022

The interviews were taken in the daytime during the period from 10:00 am to 5:30 pm. The time was considered with the availability and free time of the household for an interview. The interview took place in the convenient places of the interviewees such as their working places, besides street food vendors shops and some time in their houses.

Research Team

A total of 14 research members were involved with the study [list attached]

Along with the team leader there were a research coordinator, a supervisor, six senior researchers and five research associates (four university students and one school teacher) participated in the study.

The research team received the training that helped them understand how to collect information on poverty, hunger, and the institutions that are supposed to provide services to the people. The team felt confident in collecting information, compiling and analyzing the data about these very sensitive and interesting issues of the study.

Training of the Researchers & Questionnaire development

A questionnaire was developed for a quantitative survey on income, expenditure, food support, food consumption, family essential services, nutrition, social security, state services, allowances and related other issues.

A three-day-long training workshop was organized from December 17, 2021, to December 20, 2021, on human rights as it is inscribed in the international human rights documents for young researchers to strengthen their capacity to develop a rights-based approach to community development and social justice.

This is one of the research training on conceptual and methodological concerns to strengthen UBINIG's capacity to address transformative social practices at the interconnected junctures of conceptual, juridical, and international covenants to which Bangladesh is a signatory and a Party. The training workshop has a particular focus on the situation of SDG 1, 2, and 16 with the empirical data from the poorer communities of Bangladesh. The training workshop was particularly organized in preparation for empirical field-level research sponsored by Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRIC). The training provided focused orientation to the field surveyors who will collect data by stratified random sampling from three selected areas: 1. Dhaka (slums), 2. Tangail (Sadar Pouroshova) and 3. Kushtia (Kumarkhali Pouroshova).

Eight field research associates from 3 districts, along with supervisors of the researchers in Dhaka participated in this workshop. A total of 15 participants, including organizers, took part in the workshop.

The research areas were selected to get a diversity of occupational categories of the poor with different income categories. Within these areas, the sample is selected purposively from different categories of occupational diversity and also to get a representation of different wards of the Pouroshova.

A discussion was held by forming smaller groups about their understanding of SDG 1, 2 and 16 and how it related to human rights. Emphasis was given on factors such as access to food and health services facilities; and access to services provided by various institutions.

The draft Questionnaire was intensively discussed with the participants in the training session and was revised with the feedback from the participants. The questionnaire was tested in the nearby slum areas in Dhaka by the participants who are engaged with the study. Afterward, the discussion was held in detail about the responses and was further developed with made the questionnaire finalized.

Challenges / Difficulties

During the collection of information for the interview, some sought of difficulties faced by the research team. Some of them assumed that the research team were from the government

or Local Government Institutions. Accordingly, they asked why you are not providing the government / LGI support for the poor people?

Some of the interviewees were not comfortable with some of the questions, such as the following:

- Land ownership and assets
- Physical torture of family members
- Afraid of going out at night of any family members
- Sexually violated or harassed
- Speed money needed of the government office for the work

Research Team

No.	Name	Designation
1.	Farida Akhter, Executive, Director, UBINIG	Team leader
2.	Jahangir Alam Jony, Director, UBINIG	Research Coordinator
3.	Shima Das Shimu, Director, UBINIG	Supervisor
4.	Rokeya Begum, UBINIG, Dhaka	Senior Researcher,
5.	Golam Rabbi Badal, UBINIG Dhaka	Senior Researcher
6.	Robiul Islam Chunnu, Coordinator, UBINIG Tangail Center	Senior Researcher
7.	Doli Bhadra, Coordinator, UBINIG Kushtia Center	Senior Researcher
8.	Abdul Zabbar, UBINIG, Kushtia	Senior Researcher
9.	Md. Shahinur Rahman, Diploma and BSC in computer Science	Research Associate
10.	Monir Hossain, Student, Philosophy, Hons	Research Associate
11.	Sirajus Salekin, Student, information and Communication Technology (ICT), Hons	Research Associate
12.	Md. Ashiqur Rahman, Diploma in Electrical Science	Research Associate
13.	Ashrafun Nahar Shuchi, School Teacher	Research Associate
14.	Abul Kalam	IT section, UBINIG

SECTION3: FINDINGS

A. Profile of the respondents

About 303 sample households in Dhaka slums, Kumarkhali Pourashova in Kushtia and Sadar Pouroshova in Tangail districts were interviewed. The profile of the respondents is the following:

Age and Gender

Over 68% of the respondents were below 50 years and about 31% are over 50 years of age. For the overall sample, the majority of the respondents were male (58%); In Kushtia the majority were female (65%), in Tangail, more male (80%) and Dhaka, it was equal (50%).

Table 3: Age and gender distribution of the respondents in three areas

Categories	Kushtia	Tangail	Dhaka	Total	%
Age					
<20	0	1	4	5	2
20 - 29	10	14	11	35	12
30 - 39	47	18	19	84	28
40 - 49	22	25	31	78	26
50 +	28	44	21	93	31
NA	1	1	6	8	1
Total	108	103	92	303	100
Gender					
Male	49	83	46	178	59
Female	59	20	46	125	41
Total	108	103	92	303	100

Eighty-seven percent of the respondents were married, 8% were widowed; this rate was higher in Dhaka (14%). Only 1% was found as divorced and 2% unmarried.

The respondents were either the head of the household (H/H) available at the time of the interview (69%) or the wife (19%). In Kushtia, the availability of the head of the household was less than in the other areas, so about one-third (33%) were wives, (women respondents). In Dhaka also the percentage of wives as respondents were 22%. In Tangail the head of the households (78%) were available for interview. An earning member of the family (16%) also responded to the questionnaire.

In terms of religious identity, the majority were Muslim (94%) and Hindu households (6%) were found in Tangail and Kushtia.

Education and Economic condition

Among the respondents, 48% did not have any formal education; this rate is highest among respondents in Tangail (58%), i.e. more than half. Thirty-one percent of the respondents have primary education and 15% have secondary education. The education over secondary is only 4%.

Table 4: Education of the respondents in three areas

Education	Kushtia	Tangail	Dhaka	Total	%
No formal education	47	59	40	146	48
Primary	35	24	34	93	31
Secondary	23	11	13	47	15
SSC	1	4	2	7	2
HSC	2	4	2	8	2
NA		1	1	2	
Total	108	103	92	303	98

The family type was nuclear in 69% of cases, but about one-third (31%) have joint families. Besides husband-wife-children, these families have brothers, parents as part of the family. This is also a characteristic of poor families having more dependent members and for income sharing.

Less than half of the respondents (43%) own land in their villages. In Kushtia, it is even less (37%) and in Dhaka, it is higher (54%).

About 44% of the samples live in a rented house. This rate is very high in the Dhaka slum (91%). In Dhaka, only 5 Bihari families had their houses built who were given land by the government as a refugee in the Bihari camp.

The ownership of houses is higher 66% in Kushtia compared to 43% in Tangail. In Kushtia, many families were living on government Khas land, railway land, and enemy property lease taken from the government. In Tangail, the use of government Khas land was quite common.

The categorization of the families as poor or lower-income was a decision given by the respondents themselves. About 48% categorized themselves as poor and 50% as low income. In Kushtia, no family categorized themselves as poor, they preferred to be called low income (94%). Only 5% categorized themselves as Middle income or better off.

B. Occupation, income, and expenditure

Occupations & livelihood options

The occupation of the respondents did not fall in the categories of formal works. Small business was only 18%; it was higher for respondents in Tangail (33%). Domestic work is 8%, i.e. mostly for women. Only 4% fell in the fixed salaried job. For the majority of the respondents, it was the “others” category which included different kinds of works. For example, in Kushtia, the occupations mentioned were tailor, fish hawker, mason helper, egg seller, caretaker, making a paper packet, timekeeper at CNG taxi station, selling clothes at the footpath, sewing pillow cover, a guard at bus counter, in Tangail- tailor, cobbler, domestic worker, processing spices on marriage ceremony and beggar. In Dhaka, it was a vegetable vendor, boatman, occasional driver, garbage picker etc.

1. Income earned

In terms of daily income, 12% of the households had less than Tk. 160, the percentage of households in this category is higher in Tangail (14%) and Dhaka (26%). That is, over one-fourth of the samples in Dhaka had a daily income of less than Tk.160. About 44% have income less than Tk. 350 and 31% have less than Tk. 500.

Table 5: The daily income of the head of the household

The daily income of H/H	Kushtia	Tangail	Dhaka	Total	%
<160	1	14	21	36	12
160- 350	19	53	55	127	48
351- 500	59	27	3	89	29
500+	22	8	1	31	10
NA	7	1	12	20	1
Total	108	103	92	303	100

Ninety percent of the families had over three earning members in the family. This pattern was found to be common across all the research areas of Tangail, Kushtia, and Dhaka. But 52% of the other earning family members were less than Tk. 160 as daily income and 34% have less than Tk. 350. So even though there are family members as earning members but they can contribute very little to the pot.

2. Income-less days

There are days without any income for 73% of the sample households and this pattern is almost similar in all three areas. In Dhaka, there were fewer days without any income; less than 10 days for 81% of households. In contrast, in Tangail and Kushtia only 11% of households had less than 10 days without income. In Kushtia and Tangail there were 36%

and 39% of families respectively who had no income for over thirty days during the previous six months of the interview.

3. Household Expenditure

Almost half of the sample families (49%) spent less than Tk. 5000 on food per month, which is about Tk. 167 per day only. With this amount, they can only purchase one kg rice, 0.5 kg potato, 100 gm mustard oil, green chili of BDT 10, 100gm onion. Sometimes they have low price Pangash and Tilapia fish.

The percentage of low expenditure on food was for over 60% samples in Dhaka slums and Tangail (36%). Only 25% of the samples are spending over Tk.6000 to Tk.10,000 on food. This rate is higher among Tangail (43%) families, and lower in those of Dhaka (19%).

In the previous month, (November 2021) the total expenditure including food, education, health, and others, 8% of sample families spent less than Tk.5000 and 18% spent between Tk. 5000 to Tk. 10,000. In Kushtia, the percentage is higher (11%) and lower (5%) for Tangail samples. About a third of the sample families (30%) spend over Tk.10,000 to Tk.15,000. But the number of samples spent over Tk. 10,000 is higher (41%) in Dhaka slums, and lower (19%) in Kushtia.

Among the 43 families with more specific information on health expenditure, it varied between Tk. 4000 to Tk.5000 per month. For some treatments, the cost was found as high as Tk. 35,000 to Tk. 1 lakh. The source of money was not their regular income but a loan from relatives, micro-credit, selling off assets like auto-rickshaw, use of savings etc. for treatment of diabetes, cardiac disease, thyroid, pregnancy, cesarian operation, treatment of disabled child etc.

C. Access to food

The sample families in the three areas gave information about their daily meals, including breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Breakfast: There is no breakfast for the families. The common breakfast is leftover soaked rice from dinner called *Pantha bhaat*, with vegetables or potato mash, *jau bhat* (a preparation of liquid rice cooked with salt), green chilli and onion, ruti (in some cases). The reason for cooking Jau bhat with more water (liquid form) is to increase its volume and be eaten with salt & chilli only. In Dhaka, men were found to eat paratha from the nearby tea shops and some of them receive breakfast from the house they are working. For children, mothers manage to have biscuits as the child become hungry.

Lunch & Dinner: Lunch & dinner are almost the same, which includes rice, vegetables, fish (sometimes), potato mash, egg, and lentil. The common lunch is rice-potato mash-dal (lentil). Egg (poultry) is a cheaper source of protein for them. No meat was mentioned for lunch. However, in Dhaka, families could buy the parts of poultry meat (legs, arms, liver, skin of the

chicken) in the market. During Eidul Azha, some families could collect beef from the surrounding areas. Some families cook khichuri (a preparation of rice and lentil together). Cheaper fish like pangas are available sometimes. Vegetables also are not entirely fresh. They get the leftover vegetable pieces, such as cauliflower, cabbage which are sold in the market at a cheaper price.

However, in terms of cooking of food, there are mostly two meals, sometimes even cooking of one meal only. There are differences in the three sample areas. The pattern is the cooking of two meals. The domestic workers receive a meal from the employer's house.

One important question for the cooking of food is the availability of fuel. These families do not have access to gas or cannot purchase cylinder gas. Kerosene is also very expensive, yet have to use it. In Dhaka, they use firewood and use the electric heater (through illegal connection). The gas line for two chulas in slums in Dhaka is available for use by 45 families. This leads to a big cue for cooking. They depend on collecting firewood and dry leaves, sawmill waste, dry waste papers, polythene etc. In Kushtia, they use wheat straw and cow dung for cooking.

The main eating time in Dhaka is lunch. The families can come to their houses for a quick lunch. The leftover is saved for dinner and the next morning's breakfast. In Tangail, the main eating time is dinner. Cooking is also for the evening. Leftover is saved for next morning breakfast and lunch for children. In Kushtia, they cook in the morning for three meals breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Seventy-five percent of the sample families are dependent on market food, i.e. they need cash to purchase food. In Dhaka, it is 97%, and in Kushtia it is 100%. Only in Tangail, it is lower (31%) and about 39% can have own-produced food.

1. Hunger situation

Information on days spent without food reveals a tragic picture. It was however a difficult question to get an appropriate answer. Nobody counted the days they had spent without food. The information was available for 48% of the sample families.

There is a large percentage of sample families (85%) who have spent 6-10 days without food in a month. For Tangail, it is 100%, for Kushtia 76%. In Dhaka, this percentage was less than 23%. About 59% of families reported about 1-5 days without food.

The study did not have the scope to check the nutritional status of the family members. But it was found 25 families had children 'referred as weak' by their family members. Out of these 25 members, who were seen as weak on the day of the interview, 5 were sick and others said they did not have enough food to eat.

D. Tobacco use

The tobacco use rate is very high among the sample households. Thirty-seven per cent of the sample families have smokers, 57% have users of smokeless tobacco, and 6% have both

smokers and smokeless tobacco users. The rate of smokeless tobacco users is the highest 95%, i.e. almost all the sample households had a smoker or smokeless tobacco user. In contrast, in Dhaka, the percentage of samples in smokeless tobacco use is 33%, but the percentage is higher for smokers (57%).

Jorina Begum, a domestic worker said: “I take a small quantity of betel leaf with jarda (Ratan jarda). Monthly expenditure BDT150-200”.

Lakhmi Rani spends Tk. 5.00 per day on Pan-jarda, Kajoli Khatun spends Tk. 15 per week, Samiron spends Tk.10 in two days. An average of Tk. 100 to 150 is spent on jarda per month. The reason for them to take these tobacco products is not addiction, but according to them, it helps to subside “hunger” at lunch time. They cannot eat food when they are hungry. At that time it is easier to have a Pan with jarda which helps them to control the feeling of hunger for a long time.

Institutional support to poor people

Food support

Only 6 sample families (2%) reported receiving any food support during the previous 6 months. In Dhaka, no family received any support from any government institutions. The type of food support was Rice and Dal. The Commissioner of Pouroshova and the Councilor gave rice as food support. In Kushtia, the four families received food support including oil with rice and dal provided by a person. In two cases food support was given by the local government members.

Education of children

Sixty-two percent of families have children going to school. In Dhaka among the 38 families, only 4 go to govt school, 17 to Madrasha and 5 to NGO.

Table 6: Children going to educational institutions

Children going in school	Kushtia	Tangail	Dhaka	Total	%
Yes	75	74	38	187	62
No	31	29	43	103	34
Not available	2	0	11	13	4
Total	108	103	92	303	100

In Tangail, among the 75 families, 51 go to govt school and 10 to Madrasha, 13 to non-government & private school. In Kushtia among the 75 families, 58 go to government school, 4 to Madrasha, and 12 to semi-government schools and colleges. That is, among those children going to school or educational institutions, only 60% are having education in a government school, about 16% go to madrasah, and 16% to semi-government or private schools. Some children are going to college as well.

Healthcare

Only 24% of the sample households use government hospitals for healthcare. In Kushtia and Tangail, the use rate of the government hospitals is mixed with the use of private doctors, drug store, and kabiraj. In Dhaka, public hospitals are more accessible. Private hospitals are too expensive. The only medical care is available through the Pharmacies/Drug store by purchasing medicine self-prescribed or prescribed by the Drug store seller.

Those who do not have enough money to spend on treatment use public hospitals such as District Sadar hospitals. Yet there are costs they need to incur. Those who chose not to use the public hospital have many other reasons. They have to incur the cost of transport, the cost of diagnostic tests is high as the hospital does not provide all the tests.

Allowances for old age, widow and disability

Old age allowance

Poor families having members over 60 years of age are entitled to old-age allowances. Among the sample households, 81 families had male members over the age of 60 years, and 51 families with female members over the age of 60 years. Older men are not found to receive any allowance from the government. Less than half (47%) of the older women received an old-age allowance in the three areas.

Disability

Thirty families (10%) of the sample reported disability; in Kushtia it was higher (13%), while in Dhaka it was 5%. The types of disability include physical and mental disabilities. Physical disabilities happened due to road accidents, paralysis, sickness, and old age; mental retardation was reported for children; some cannot speak and hear. Blindness is also found among women over 50 years. Some older women suffered from fever or typhoid but got paralyzed afterward.

Accidents and inadequate treatment for typhoid and other diseases resulted in longer-term disability for young and older people. Seventy percent of persons with disability received some kind of allowance.

Table 7: Number of persons with disability and allowances

Areas	# disability	Disability allowance (Yes)	Disability allowance (No)
Tangail	11	7	4
Dhaka	5	2	3
Kushtia	14	12	2
Total	30	21	9

Twenty-one (70%) out of 30 reported persons with disability received an allowance.

Government services (Health, ID cards, birth certificate)

The respondents were asked if they went to any government office for any service during the previous 6 months, only 9 families (3%) responded positively.

Table 8: visit a government office during the previous 6 months

Visited govt office	Kushtia	Tangail	Dhaka	Total	%
Yes	3	4	2	9	3
No	105	99	90	289	95
Total	108	103	92	303	100

Out of the 9 families, 2 families in Dhaka went to the government office for a trade license of a shop and the birth registration of the child. In Tangail, the local government representatives gave Semai, sugar, rice for the Eid festival. In Kushtia, the Pouroshova Commissioner and Union Parishad members asked about their well-being. The Councilor also came to enquire about them.

Security

A difficult and uncomfortable question was asked if they (both men and women) were afraid to go out at night. Men were reluctant to answer such questions yet, 17 families (6%) admitted that they do not feel secure to go out at night. For women, it was 45 families (15%). Interestingly, nearly a quarter of the women felt insecure, while in Kushtia it was less than 10%.

Table 3: Feeling of insecurity to move at night by women

Afraid going out at night	Kushtia	Tangail	Dhaka	Total	%
Yes	8	24	13	45	15
No	97	79	79	255	85
NA	3	0	0	3	0
Total	108	103	92	303	100

Permanent Address

However, 83% of the sample have a Permanent address, which means they have some connection to their villages. In Tangail, 97% of the samples have a permanent address, but in Dhaka, it is 70%. That is, about one-third of the samples do not have any Permanent address, where they can go back.

Rani Begum (45) of Rayerbazar slum in Dhaka said: “ I have no permanent address of my own. I used the address of my brothers as my permanent address”. She is a widow and has no adult male members in the family.

The inheritance rights of Muslim women from their father’s property is only half of the brothers, yet the land property is often not shared by the brothers. In Tangail, Amena Begum a young widow (40) lives on her own. She does not get anything from her in-laws. She built a house on the land given by my father. Her father gave two decimals of the land but he died before giving her a registered deed of the land. Her brothers are trying to push her out of the land. She is nervous about the fate of the land. She said, “Allah only knows what I have on fate”.

Amena’s husband died 20 years ago when her son was only 8 months old. She had been working as a domestic worker in the house of neighbors and brought my children up with this income. She raises goat as a support income to the family. Now her son is married and lives separately with his wife and children in a rented house. He does not feel to care for me. Rather, he creates pressure to take money from her. Her daughter is married to a carpenter but very abusive to her daughter. She said, “He(her son-in-law) is a greedy creature. He has a sharp eye on the money that I get selling a goat.”

SECTION 4: DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS

This study, a socio-economic survey on the 303 poorer households in three areas, namely Dhaka (slum), Tangail Sadar Pouroshova, and Kumarkhali Pouroshova of Kushtia was conducted to assess the concrete situation of poverty, income, and access to food in light of Sustainable Development goals 1 and 2 related to human rights and accountable institutions focusing on goal 16.

The profile of the poor

The study samples (303) were selected randomly among the poorer households in the sample areas of Dhaka (slum), Tangail Sadar Pouroshova, and Kumarkhali Pouroshova in Kushtia. The majority were Muslim (94%) and Hindu households (6%) were found in Tangail and Kushtia. In general, 48% of the respondents did not have any formal education. In Tangail the rate was higher (58%). Only 31% have primary education and 15% have secondary education. The education over secondary is only 4%. The lack of education is also reflected in the kind of occupation. The categories of formal works in terms of salaried jobs were hardly there. Only 4% fell in the fixed salaried job, such as a driver. Small business was only 18%, but higher for

respondents in Tangail (33%). These small businesses are also very informal. For women, the common work was of Domestic help (8%). The other examples are, in Kushtia, tailor, fish hawker, mason helper, egg seller, caretaker, making a paper packet, timekeeper at CNG taxi station, selling clothes at the footpath, sewing pillow cover, a guard at bus counter, in Tangail-tailor, cobbler, domestic worker, processing spices on marriage ceremony and beggar. In Dhaka, it was a vegetable vendor, boatman, occasional driver, garbage picker, etc.

These households do not belong to the present places they are now living. They are migrants who have left their villages in search of livelihood. In Kushtia, many families lived on government Khas land, railway land, and enemy property leases taken from the government. In Tangail, the use of government Khas land was quite common. But here they are living for a long time. However, they remain under the threat of eviction in case of any government 'development' plan. In Dhaka, 91% lived in rented houses; only 5 Bihari families had their houses built who were given land by the government as refugees in the Bihari camp. But they also do not have land in their villages. Less than half of the respondents (43%) own land in their villages. They are migrants to the cities. However, for the households in Dhaka slums, more than half (54%) have some land in their villages, i.e. they still keep some relation in the villages as Dhaka city does not offer a permanent livelihood opportunity for them.

It was interesting to see that the households did not want to categorize themselves as "poor" although their condition reflected poverty. Yet, 48% of the households categorized themselves as poor and 50% as low income. In Kushtia, no family categorized themselves as poor, they preferred to be called low income (94%). Only 5% categorized themselves as Middle income or better off.

SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

In Bangladesh, the percentage of people living in poverty headcount at \$1.90 a day³ was 14.3% according to the World Bank data in 2016 (Bank, The World Bank Data, 2016). However, the COVID pandemic has impacted the increase of the poverty line to 24%. According to the GOB progress report on SDG, the population below the lower poverty line has also decreased to 10.5 percent (GOB, June 2020).

The present study was conducted in December 2021 which was already in the pandemic period. Therefore it was not a surprise that the poor families were affected by the pandemic. In the study over and above the factors that caused the degrading situation. The situation was assessed among the poorer communities and the findings represent 303 sample households.

³ World Bank, Development Research Group. Data are based on primary household survey data obtained from government statistical agencies and World Bank country departments. (iresearch.worldbank.org/PovcalNet/index.htm) The percentage of the population living on less than \$1.90 a day at 2011 international prices (<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.DDAY?locations=BD>).

The findings are indicative and illustrate the need for more comprehensive research with a larger sample size as well as different but targeted areas and communities. The present study shows at least 12% of the households had less than Tk. 160 (less than \$1.90). The percentage is higher (14%) in the semi-urban municipality area of Tangail and even higher (26%) in the Dhaka slum. That is, over one-fourth of the samples in Dhaka slums had a daily income of less than \$1.90. Less than half of the sample (44%) have income less than Tk. 350 (\$4) and about one-third (31%) have less than Tk. 500 (\$6). These families cannot survive on one earning member only. Ninety percent of the families had over three earning members in the family, among them more than half (52%) of the other earning family members had less than \$1.90 a day. So even though there are family members as earning members they could contribute very little to the pot. The monthly income of these households is less than Tk.5000 (\$58.2).

The income-earning was not regular. During the previous six months, 73% of the sample households in the sample areas have passed days without any income. In Dhaka, there were less than 10 days for 81% of households. In contrast, in Tangail and Kushtia only 11% of households had less than 10 days without income. In Kushtia and Tangail there were 36% and 39% of families respectively had no income for over thirty days during the previous six months. What it means in reality for these families is expressed in the case studies.

Motaleb Ali (27), weaving labour in Kushtia

We eat a single meal a day when there is no work. We buy low-quality rice is at a reduced price. We collect uncultivated vegetables from the roadside, or neighbours crop fields. We cook gruel rice with collected vegetables. Gruel does not need any oil or spice. Rice and vegetables are cooked with salt adding enough water. The volume may be increased as needed by adding the required amount of water.

Hafiza Begum(32), a domestic worker in Kushtia

I did not have any work for seven days in a month. I could buy only rice and edible oil. The children were also given only rice with salt. The owner of the house where I work gave me some food. I carried that food for the children.

Shona Khatun (55), a part-time domestic worker

I don't like to remember those days. There were days when we could eat the required meal of rice after 8-10 days. Most of the days we had a little quantity of food just to survive. That food was also managed with borrowed money.

The households have to spend money on food at least to survive, even if they do not have enough income. There are ample examples of the particular form of poverty conditions that threaten mere biological existence. There are costs for the education of children and treatment costs of the family members. In the previous month, (November 2021), 8% of

families spent less than Tk.5000 (\$58.2), and 18% spent between Tk. 5000 to Tk. 10,000 on food, education, health, and others.

In Kushtia the situation is worst among the three sample areas. More households (11%) are spending less than Tk.5000 per month and better for Tangail samples (5%). About a third of the sample families (30%) spent over Tk.10,000 to Tk.15,000. But the number of samples spent over Tk.10,000 per month is higher (41%) in Dhaka slums, and lower (19%) in Kushtia. The option of earning is better in Dhaka, so they can spend more as well. But with limited income-earning opportunities, the expenditure is curtailed.

Food is the most important daily expenditure for families. Almost half of the sample families (49%) spent less than Tk. 5000 on food per month, which is about Tk. 167 per day only. With this amount, they can only purchase one kg rice, 0.5 kg potato, 100 gm mustard oil, green chili of BDT 10, 100gm onion. Sometimes they have low price Pangash and Tilapia fish. Food expenditure is also something that they can control by buying cheaper and low quantity food items.

SDG 2: Zero Hunger

For SDG 2, to end hunger, the Bangladesh government only shows the reduction of the percentage of the undernourished population, which has gone down to 14.7 percent in 2017 from 16.4 percent in 2016. According to the progress report, Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in reducing the percentage of stunted children under-5 years to 28 percent in 2019. The present UBINIG study did not have the scope to measure mal and undernutrition. But got extensive information on the access to food for all the family members including children. The sample families in the three areas gave information about their daily meals, including breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Although they have referred to three meals a day (breakfast, lunch, and dinner) the kind of food they eat for each meal was not up to the standard nutrition, [see section III of the report].

The day starts with eating some *Panta Bhaat* leftover food from dinner. The *Panta Bhaat* is soaked rice from dinner fermented over a night. The day may also start cooking *Jau Bhaat*, preparation of liquid rice cooked with salt. This is a common practice. These are taken with vegetables or potato mash, green chili, and onion. The earning members of the family go out for work by eating the leftover. The *Jau Bhaat* is cooked with more water (liquid form) to increase its volume and be eaten with salt & chili only. During the interviews, some children were seen to be hungry and crying for food. The *Jau Bhaat* is no more interesting food for them. Some women were seen to buy biscuits for children at breakfast time. For men eating from tea shops and for domestic workers to get some food in the employer's house is an additional food.

Lunch & dinner are almost the same, with rice, vegetables, fish (sometimes), potato mash, egg, and lentil. The common lunch is rice-potato mash (*Alu Bharta*) and *Dal* (lentil) [see section III]. There is hardly any animal protein (meat); fish protein and egg are occasional. The

market provides an alternative source of protein. The unused pieces of poultry chicken, cheaper fish, cultivated with the use of pesticides and other harmful feed, poultry eggs with the use of antibiotics, and the broken vegetable pieces are sold in the market at a cheaper price. Poor people are happy to get these foods in the market at an affordable price.

In the discussion on several meals, the most striking information was about the fuel needed for cooking. Although they are living within a city and under a municipal area, these families do not have access to gas. They cannot afford to purchase cylinder gas. Kerosene is expensive. Under such conditions, the slum dwellers use the electric connection (illegal) for cooking. The slum house owners provide the gas line for two *Chulas* (cooking stoves) for common use by 45 families. This leads to a big cue for cooking. While the middle class and upper class have an uninterrupted gas line or can use cylinder gas, the dwellers of the slum have to depend on collecting firewood and dry leaves, sawmill waste, dry waste papers, polythene, etc. So cooking becomes more difficult than collecting the ingredients of food. So they try to reduce the times of cooking to two meals a day, sometimes even cooking of one meal only. The main eating in Dhaka is lunch. The family members come to their houses for a quick lunch. The leftover is saved for dinner and the next morning's breakfast. In Tangail, the main eating time is dinner. Cooking is also for the evening. Leftover is saved for next morning breakfast and lunch for children. In Kushtia, they cook in the morning for three meals breakfast, lunch and dinner. This certainly has implications for nutrition.

Some cases

1. Her husband brought wheat flour from the OMS Truck standing in a cue for a long time. He went to buy rice, but he did not have enough money. The daughter asked the mother to sell the wheat flour and buy rice. She wanted to eat rice” - *Hanufa Begum*, Dhaka slum Jahuri Mohalla
2. *Aluni Begum* remains hungry but offers her share of meals and eggs to her son. Her son works and earns some income. So she felt the need to give better food to him. - *Aluni Begum*, Dhaka slum in Jahuri Mohalla. She works as a domestic helper.
3. “ I take betel leaf to suppress hunger” – *Renu Begum*, Aziz Mohalla. Her son is a disabled person, her daughter works outside but does not have enough income.

SDG 16: Responsibility of the Institutions

The meaningful achievement of the SDG, particularly SDG1 and SDG 2 depends a lot on the effective implementation of SDG 16, which ensures providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. This study was limited to the rights and access of the poor people to food, health, education, and other civil rights.

Here we tried to get an impression from the sample households about their contact with the relevant public official or the institutions for the services they needed.

Education and health services are free but not satisfactory

The poor households want to send their children to school. Among the 303 sample households, 187 families (62%) have children (in school-going age) who are going to an educational institute. In Tangail and Kushtia, there are better options, around 74% had children going to primary school, high school, or a madrasah. Although the government primary education is free and should be accessible for all, not all the children were going to a government school. There were NGO-run schools and even private schools. Though, the books are free, yet the cost of education becomes a factor. It was revealed that those who go to government school do not need to incur any cost, which is an encouragement. The children also need to help their parents with work after their school. In Madrasah also they have to incur some costs.

In the case studies, there are stories about the discontinuation of education. Dulal Mia (50) had his daughter going to a government school. She read up to class II, but could not continue. As he said, “We do not have money to buy books, pens, etc. We also don’t have money to pay tuition fees”.

Kajoli Khatun, (38) a weaver in Kushtia has good experience in a government school. Her daughter goes to a government primary school. She reads in class 1. Books and other essential items were given from the school free of cost.

Abdul Huq (33), a waste-product seller in Dhaka slum has three children, two of them go to a private school and one goes to Madrasa. The monthly expenditure on education is Tk.2000.

It is therefore not enough to know if the children are going to school, but have to see if they can continue to get education up to the level they would like to go. There is hardly any mechanism in the educational institutions to ensure education for the poor.

For health care services, there is a government hospital at the primary and Tertiary levels. The sample households in Tangail and Kushtia could use the Upazilla and district hospitals, while in Dhaka the slum dwellers use the nearest government hospital; in this study, it was Suhrawardy Hospital. In general, government hospitals are preferred for free prescriptions and some free medicine. Private hospitals are expensive. The long waiting time in the government hospitals is a discouragement for the working poor. So the short-cut treatment is available through the Pharmacies/Drug stores by purchasing medicine self-prescribed or prescribed by the Drug store seller.

Some cases:

Kajoli Khatun, (38), Kumarkhali Pourashova, Kushtia:

“I had fever, cough, headache and urine infection. I went to Kumarkhali Upazila hospital for treatment. I was referred to a private clinic for a test of urine infection. I again went to the Upazila hospital with the test result. A small quantity of medicine was

given from the hospital. I was given a prescription and was advised to buy the medicine from outside”.

Renu Begum (50), Dhaka slum:

“We go to Shohrowardi hospital. Previously I had been to the Ward Commissioner to get a free seat for my husband in the hospital. I was refused on the ground that I had a voter identification card from the village. Then we used the voter identification of my son-in-law. We are ignored because we are poor”.

Experiences in receiving the Health services

The poor cannot afford to remain sick. They have to choose between the public health facility versus the private clinics or private doctors, which is very expensive. But the experiences in the public hospital are not often satisfactory.

Firoza Begum (50), Dhaka:

‘We go to the Sohorawardi hospital. That is a government hospital. Standing in the line for a long time hurts our legs. But we have nothing to do. We don’t have enough money to go to the private hospital. They shout at us when we ask for something. They say, don’t talk too much. Talk less. Come later. We aren’t given proper medicine. We have to buy most of the medicine from outside”.

Hafiza Begum, (32), Kushtia:

“We go to Upazila hospital for treatment. There is no ticket price and some medicines are also given. We have to buy the rest of the medicines from the medicine shop with our own money. When someone in the family becomes ill, we have to bring medicine instead of not taking a meal”.

The ill-treatment at the health facilities to the poor people, because of their clothes and their looks, leads to avoiding going to the hospital and taking short-cut treatment from the pharmacies.

***Bhata*: Allowances to the poor**

In the 303 households in three areas, there are 132 members (81 male and 51 female) who are over 60 years of age. There is an allowance known as *Boyoshko Bhata*, (old age allowance) which is given to members over 60 years of age. This old age allowance is allocated as a monthly rate of Tk.500. Another allowance is *Bidhoba Bhata* (widow allowance) at Tk. 500 per month and *Protibondhi Bhata* (disability allowance) at Tk. 750 per month. However, the payment is made on a quarterly or six-monthly basis.

Except for the Disability Allowance, old age and widow allowance are given to women. Among the 51 women, less than half received an old-age allowance.

Thirty families (10%) of the sample reported physical and mental disabilities among young and older family members. Mental retardation among children including hearing and speaking impairment was observed. Physical disabilities happened due to road accidents and inadequate treatment of diseases like typhoid led to paralysis. Twenty-one (70%) of persons with disability received disability allowances. The families of those, who receive the payment, benefit because they can manage some costs of their treatment.

For the widow allowance, younger widows are not given any allowance, because of the possibility of re-marriage. This has been very difficult for the younger widows. They have to raise their children and also they were not remarried. But they were denied of the widow allowance on age grounds.

Satisfaction over services received

The sample families, mostly poor, have very little sense of what services they are supposed to get from the government or the governmental institutions. It was revealed very clearly from the responses to the question about the kind of services they receive from any government institution. Does any government official visit your area? The response from Habu Mian in Dhaka Muhammedpur was “No, no one comes. We are poor. We do not go anywhere for any service and no one comes to us either”. Another response was “We do not even know who are the government officials?” -Ruma, Dhaka slum. “no one bothers about the poor” Muhammed Ali, Dhaka slum.

Lakhmi Rani Sarker of Kushtia said: “During last one year, nobody came to see whether we are alive or not”.

Only 9 households in three areas visited a government office during the last 6 months for a trade license of a shop and the birth registration of the child. In Tangail, however, some sample families reported visits by the local councilor during the Eid festival and giving them Semai, sugar, etc. Here are some responses from the respondents about their interactions with the public institutions.

- Rani Begum of Dhaka slum said that she did not go to any government office. However, she had to pay extra money to get rice from the OMS truck. The open market sale (OMS) of coarse rice is sold at the rate of Tk 30 per kg. The OMS programme is meant for providing rice to common people for relatively low prices by the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh under the Ministry of Food.
- Rani Begum does not have a birth certificate. She said: “One woman came and demanded Tk. 500 to make birth registration but we did not have that much money. So we did not get it.” She also does not get the widow allowance because she is 45 years old.
- Amena Begum (40), a widow, works as a domestic worker. She did not get any support from the government except the widow allowance two times a year at Tk. 3000 half-yearly, i.e. Tk.6000 yearly.

But other support from the local government is not given on the ground because she is not a voter in the area where she lives. They advised her to go there where she is a voter.

Relief

One of the perceptions among the people is that they can get relief support in times of a disaster. But the reality they face is different. Here are some cases:

Mohammad Ali (42), a Van driver who comes from Pirojpur, a district in the southwestern part of the country. He lives in Dhaka slum with a daily average income of Tk. 500, said:

“I had been to commissioner’s office to collect relief but I was not given anything on the ground that I was not a voter here. I was advised to go to my village home for relief”.

Lakshmi Rani Sarker (27) of Kumarkhali, Kushtia said:

“My husband has no birth registration. We had been to the municipality office for birth registration. We were asked about the name of the school and the year of attendance at school. Accordingly, we visited the school for the required information but the school could not provide it. We again visited the municipality office but could not make the birth registration. The sons were not also given birth registration because their father did not have registration of birth”.

Motaleb Ali, a weaver in Kushtia narrated his experience with the government offices. He got allotment of government housing and does not need to pay any rent. He also got 10kg rice from the local government in Ramadan festival. He was also happy to get a phone call from the municipality office about 6 months back and got 8 kg rice, 1kg pulse and 1 kg salt and 0.5 kg soybean oil. His mother got a widow allowance of Tk. 3000 in 2020. But in 2021, he visited Upazila head quarter eight times to collect the old age allowance of his mother but did not get any money.

Jorina Begum, a domestic worker in Tangail said: “I am not a voter here. So we are not given any help from the local government.” is a widow but does not get any widow allowance, although she has a NID card. Her mother-in-law got a widow allowance in the village. She had to pay BDT 700 to get that.

There were reports of bribery and harassment for a few cases, but the general remark was that they are apprehensive of bribery and harassment, so do not even go there unless they are forced to.

Security

One of the indicators of SDG 16 was the feeling of safety in walking alone. We added the question of whether they felt secure in going out alone at night. This was a difficult and uncomfortable question to them. Men were reluctant to answer such questions yet, 17 families (6%) admitted that they do not feel secure to go out at night. For women, it was 45

families (15%). Interestingly, nearly a quarter of the women felt insecure in Dhaka, while in Kushtia it was less than 10%. The feeling of insecurity is mostly due to the lack of law and order situation and the domination of political forces.

Permanent Address

The lack of a permanent address was found in 17% of households. Only 83% of the sample have a Permanent address, which refers to an address in their villages. About one-third of the samples in Dhaka have lost connection to their villages, while in Tangail and Kushtia they are better off in this respect. The absence of a permanent address was found more in the case of widow. Here are few cases:

- Rani Begum (45) of Rayerbazar slum in Dhaka said: “ I have no permanent address of my own. I used the address of my brothers as my permanent address”. She is a widow and has no adult male members in the family.
- The inheritance rights of Muslim women from their father’s property is only half of the brothers, yet the land property is often not shared by the brothers. In Tangail, Amena Begum a young widow (40) lives on her own. She does not get anything from her in-laws. She built a house on the land given by my father. Her father gave two decimals of the land but he died before giving her a registered deed of the land. Her brothers are trying to push her out of the land. She is nervous about the fate of the land. She said, “Allah only knows what I have on fate”.
- Amena’s husband died 20 years ago when her son was only 8 months old. She had been working as a domestic worker in the house of neighbours and brought my children up with this income. She raises goat as a support income to the family. Now her son is married and lives separately with his wife and children on a rented house. He does not feel to care for me. Rather, he creates pressure to take money from her. Her daughter is married to a carpenter but very abusive to her daughter. She said, “He (son-in-law) is a greedy creature. He has a sharp eye on the money that I get selling a goat.”

Having no permanent address leads to a lack of birth registration certificate, voter ID card and hence no support available from any public institutions. It means these people do not exist in the country. They are not a citizen and therefore cannot enjoy any rights.

Government Institutions: Only for allowances?

Old Age Allowance: *Boyoshko bhata*

According to Ministry of Social Welfare, the Old-age Allowance Programme was introduced in 1997-98 to provide a means-tested monthly cash payment to older people above the age of 62 years (for women) and 65 years (for men). The purpose was to enhance their social security, their position in their families and help reduce their vulnerabilities. It started with a payment of Tk. 100 per month, gradually increased to Tk.300 and presently Tk. 500 is given to the recipients. In 1997-98 the number of recipients was 4.03 lakhs (0.4 million) and in

2020-21, the number was 49.0 lakh (4.9 million). The criteria for receiving the Old age allowance are a. permanent resident, b. physically handicapped to earn an income, c. very poor, landless, refugee (*udbastu*) d. widow, divorced, childless, and disconnected from family.

The eligibility conditions include i. need to be a permanent resident of the area, ii. must have NID/birth certificate, iii. Must have less than Tk.10,000 annual income. Another criteria has been introduced that priority must be given to the freedom fighters.

The old-age allowances is provided by the amount of Tk. 500 for 4 times in a year. According to the Department of Social Services, 99.95% of the Tk. 2940 crore (2020-21) of the old age allowance has been distributed among the target group.

In this study, among the older persons in Tangail Sadar only 50% of fund was distributed among the targeted group and Kumarkhali was about 60% old allowances were distributed for the target peoples⁴.

In addition, 30 kg of rice for two times have been distributed among the old peoples during the COVID 19 lockdown period both in Tangail and Kumarkhali areas by the local government.

Moreover, the criteria of having a permanent residence, birth certificate, and NID are hard to comply with for those who deserve these allowances.

Disability Allowance: *Oshocchol Protibondi Bhata*

The Government of Bangladesh introduced a targeted cash transfer for persons with disabilities in 2006. This transfer, known as the Allowance for the financially insolvent persons with disabilities is implemented by the Ministry of Social Welfare through the Department of Social Security in co-operation with committees at the national, district, and regional levels. Although the program was initiated in 2006, at present the implementation of the program is guided by প্রতিবন্ধী ব্যক্তি প্রতিবন্ধী ব্যক্তির অধিকার ও সুরক্ষা আইন, ২০১৩ (**Persons with Disabilities Rights and Protection Act in Bangladesh in 2013**).

The eligibility criteria include that, persons with disabilities must be above six years of age, be a resident of the locality, and have an annual income of less than BDT 36,000 (approximately USD 300). In addition, it will give priority to older persons, the homeless, women with multiple disabilities, and children who are poor and intellectually impaired. Also should be a permanent resident of the area.

The disability allowance is Tk.750 per month forever.

The interviewee shared that about 70% of disabled persons support. It was not given on monthly basis but for 3 or 6 months.

⁴ The information was provided by S M Rafiqul Islam, Panel Mayor, Kumarkhali Minicipality and Ulka Begum, Ward Commissioner, Tangail City Corporation

Food support

The Ministry of Food provides food support through Local Government Institutions. The food support included a) Open Market sell (OMS) b) Fair price activity c) Food relief.

The food relief has been distributed among pregnant mothers, lactating mothers, old and disabled people, children who are suffering malnutrition. The food items have been distributed by the Local Government Institutions (LGI) including the city corporation, Pauroshova, Upazila, and Union Parishad. The LGI select the beneficiaries for distributing food support.

The local government institutions select the beneficiaries for food providing food support among the target groups. There is a committee of representatives from the IGI and Civil Society Organizations for the selection of the beneficiaries. Accordingly, the food item including rice, wheat flour, powder milk, semolina, etc has been distributed among the beneficiaries.

In addition, the ward commissioner is eligible to select the beneficiaries for food distribution in the Eid festival.

There is an allotment of 30 kg of rice allotment for the selective poor people in March, April, September, October, and November from the Department of Food.

Another food support program is OMS by the dealers with a minimum price (rice 30 Taka per kg and wheat flower 18 Taka per kg in the selective beneficiaries.

In two 'Eid festivals, 4600 households each of 10 rice have been distributed in Kumarkhali and 4800 households have been distributed in Sadar Tangail. These are special allocations only for Eid festivals.

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