Socially-excluded People in Bangladesh: Causes and Processes

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Abstract

This paper looks the causes and consequences of social exclusion in Bangladesh. Data were collected from the three Northern districts i.e. Pachagar, Kurigram and Rajshahi in Bangladesh. The study is a rapid assessment in order to know the causes and processes of social exclusion. The primary objective of this assessment is to identify the forms of exclusion which lock particular social groups into poverty and to describe what strategies would be employed in response to these. The study looks social exclusion in different levels such as state, market, society and family in terms of the services to the poor people provided by local institutions including non-government organization (NGO), government organization (GO) and community based organization (CBO).

Keywords: Causes of Social Exclusion; Processes of Social exclusion; Social exclusion in Bangladesh.

Introduction

'Social exclusion' has become central to policy and academic discourse. This paper looks the causes and consequences of social exclusion in Bangladesh. Data were collected from the three Northern districts i.e. Pachagar, Kurigram and Rajshahi in Bangladesh. A number of relevant literatures were also reviewed to gather information on the nature and approaches of social exclusion in general and Bangladesh. The study is a rapid assessment in order to know the causes and processes of social exclusion. The primary objective of this assessment is to identify the forms of exclusion which lock particular social groups into poverty and to describe what strategies would be employed in response to these. The study looks social exclusion in different levels such as state, market, society and family in terms of the services to the poor people provided by local institutions including non-government NGO), government (GO) and community based organization (CBO).

Social Exclusion: Meanings and Processes

The notion of social exclusion as an analytical concept originated in France in the 1960s and emphasized the risk associated with the breakdown of the social fabric through progressive rupture of the relationships between the individual and society and the ensuing loss of collective values (Bhalla, 1998; IILS, 1997). Gradually debates have widened, in particular to explain the effects of markets, as economic dimensions are now interpreted as both a cause and effect of social exclusion (Gore & Figueiredo, 1997; de Haan, 1998). An extensive project by the IILS (International Institute of Labour Studies) has sought to test the concept of social exclusion as a globally relevant paradigm (IILS, 1997).

Barnes (2005:15) refers social exclusion as a multi-dimensional and dynamic process of being shut out, fully or partially, from the economic, social and cultural systems that determine the social integration of a person in society'. On the other hand, Byrne (1999) states various forms of social exclusion which are combined: participation in decision-making and political processes, access to employment and material resources, and integration into common cultural processes.

When combined, they create acute forms of exclusion that find a spatial manifestation in particular neighbourhoods. Landman (2006:19) refers it as discrimination which involves discrimination against individuals and groups based on one or many different social attributes or elements of social identity. Such discrimination can occur as the result of formal or informal activities of the state as well as institutions and organizations in the private sector (including families, villages, and community associations). However, social exclusion is a process and a state that prevents individuals or groups from full participation in social, economic and political life and from asserting their rights. It derives from exclusionary relationships based on power (Beall & Piron 2005). It is an accumulation of confluent processes with successive ruptures arising from the heart of economy, politics and society; gradually distances and places persons, groups, communities and territories in positions of inferiority in relation to centre powers, resources and prevailing values (Estivill, 2003). The definition offered by Levitas *et al.,* (2007:25) illustrates how both approaches can be integrated: 'Social exclusion is a complex and multi-dimensional process. It involves the lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in a society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas. It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole.

Now a day, social exclusion is contested, and has multiple meanings. These meanings are being continually redefined over time and have different policy implications (Mathieson *et al.,* 2008). The term has been used to describe: groups at risk of exclusion; what people are excluded from; the states associated with exclusion; the processes involved and levels at which they operate; and the actors involved. There is some consensus that 'social exclusion' is: (a) multidimensional, encompassing social, political, cultural and economic dimensions, and operating at different social levels; (b) dynamic, impacting in different ways to differing degrees at different social levels over time; and (c) relational. A relational perspective has two dimensions. On the one hand, it focuses on exclusion as the rupture of relationships between people and the society resulting in a lack of social participation, social protection, social integration and power. Alternatively, a relational perspective points to exclusion as the product of unequal social relationships characterized by differential power i.e. the product of the way societies are organized.

As a condition or an outcome, social exclusion is a state where excluded individuals or groups are unable to participate fully in their society. Factors include the following (UN, 2007:4):
(a) Social identity, such as race, ethnicity, caste, religion, gender and age;
(b) Social location, such as remote areas, stigmatized areas, war or conflict areas;
(c) Social status, including the health situation (disability, illness of HIV/AIDS and other stigmatizing diseases), migrant status (including refugees), occupation and level of education.

The analysis of social exclusion needs to be on a multidimensional level covering social, economic, cultural and political situations. Such an approach can lead to an understanding of the various aspects and mechanisms that lead to a situation of being excluded from active life and social action in general. The UN (2007) encapsulates this multidimensional approach as follows:
(a) From a political perspective, the issue refers to the rights of citizens, access to and enjoyment of these rights, and the multiple barriers associated with them;
(b) Within a social outlook, exclusion mainly originates in specific structures and rules when individuals and collective transgression is penalized. Exclusion is manifested in the form of lack of access to many material goods; lack of access to social, educational and health services; lack of access to social protection; and lack of access to participation in life-affecting decisions;
(c) Economic exclusion gives rise to the issue of employment, diversity of access to goods and services, urban/rural segregation. Additionally, it encompasses the aspect of spatial exclusion where disadvantages are based on both who you are and on where you live, including stigmatized, remote or isolated areas;

(d) Culture and technology form other factors to social exclusion where there is dominance of certain languages, cultural and consumption patterns; or to information technology, including the access to the Internet and computers, which increasingly have become a means of virtual inclusion in the global village;

(e) Self-exclusion is a form of exclusion that cannot be ignored given that it relates to the rights of groups to exclude themselves from some aspects of social or political life. It could be a condition for artistic or intellectual creativity, or a spiritual or religious life. On the other hand, suicide can constitute an extreme form of self-exclusion.

The challenging dynamic of social exclusion lies in that the several types of exclusion are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, the different dimensions manifest themselves in a cumulative, parallel and complementary manner. Social exclusions as a concept reinforce a multidimensional regard to poverty by defining it as relative deprivation. Specifically, people are "relatively deprived if they cannot obtain, at all or sufficiently, the conditions of life—that is, the diets, amenities, standards and services—which allow them to play the roles, participate in the relationships and follow the customary behaviour which is expected of them by virtue of their membership of society. If they lack or are denied resources to obtain access to these conditions of life and so fulfilling membership of society they may be said to be in poverty (Townsend, 1993). Consequently, the concept goes beyond economic and social aspects of poverty and embraces such political aspects as political rights and citizenship. Theoretical work by Silver (1995) and Singer (1997) has explored different paradigms of social exclusion. Social exclusion can denote a situation or process of marginalization experienced by *individuals*. On the other hand social exclusion can be understood as a *structural* process which occurs in societies as a result of the malfunctioning of their institutions, and which leads to the breakdown of social cohesion and the fragmentation of social relations. Implicitly there is a core of shared values and rights around which the social order is constructed; a variety of institutions provide the mechanisms for integrating individuals in society, and exclusion reflects their failure (Room, 1995).

Experience of Social Exclusion in Bangladesh

Social exclusion is experienced in a variety of ways in Bangladeshi society, the most important of which are gender-based exclusions, patron-client relationships, and exclusion from groups working towards poverty alleviation in different ways due to extreme poverty. In addition, the impact of 'self-exclusion' from social networks may be an important issue. Islam & Morgan (2011) find mainly three dimensions of social exclusion of NGOs' services, such as NGOs' inherent weaknesses (i.e. a monolithic approach and the exclusion of ordinary people, unhealthy empowerment and malpractices of power, and management problems), some limitations were related to the country's poor socio-economic and cultural conditions (i.e. lack of social trust, role local power structures, and negative role of religious leaders), and the rest were created by the government and donor agencies (i.e. donor dependency, inaccessible market and lack of government initiative, and challenges of knowledge transfer). Hulme (2000) shows how civil society is a major player in poverty reduction strategies, but also has a role in poverty-creation and persistence. NGOs in Bangladesh encounter major structural obstacles in reaching those who are experiencing enduring poverty. In addition, NGOs find it difficult to reach the most disadvantaged due to the focus on income-generation and microfinance that donors have encouraged them to take on. Hulme's study draws attention to the exploitation of young workers, and the marginalization of the disabled as well as marginalization of widows in Bangladeshi society. Hulme (2000) shows how a widowed mother excludes herself from participation with NGOs due to fears of their inability to address her situation and that her extreme poverty will hinder her repayments of a microfinance loan. Personal development will thus have an impact on the effectiveness of the agency of the poorest. These findings require further detailed research to assess how widespread

self-exclusion is, and finding ways to overcome it in order to encourage those who will 'self-exclude' through misinformation or the most severe sense of disempowerment and marginalization. Recently, Islam & Sharmin (2011) conducted a research on social exclusion on two NGOs such as Proshika and Practical Action and find that NGOs' target groups and services have been specified to the people who are able to return back their micro-credit. As a result many people are now being excluded from NGO services who are known as 'ultra poor'. They show that many blacksmiths and gold-smiths were out of services from both NGOs rather the NGOs selected purposeful target groups, replicate of program, and their short-term development approach, high-flying profile, rent seeking attitude, monolithic development approach, lack of accountability, complex loan procedure and high interest rate, and cut-off budget from their development project were helpful for such kind of social exclusion. They mention that approximately 14 millions people are ultra poor who are excluded from NGO services.

Methodology

The study has been participatory in nature using mostly qualitative and some quantitative analyses of findings. The concerned stakeholders at each level have been made aware of specific objectives of the assessment in order to facilitate their maximum participation. This has enabled them to identify their status with special emphasis on strengths, weaknesses and potentials issues related to social exclusion and possible ways of inclusion as well. The study has been carried out in three different areas under three districts of the proposed project area. These are: Boda and Panchagarh sadar upazila of Panchagarh district, Rawmari upazila of Kurigram district and Tanore upazila of Rajshahi district. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) sessions have been organized with the PNGO staff, general villagers, elites, social leaders, school /college teachers, public representatives, local level government officials and with the hardcore poor people in the respective areas.

Specific methods of the work are described through following figure:

Figure 1: *Methodology Flow Chart*
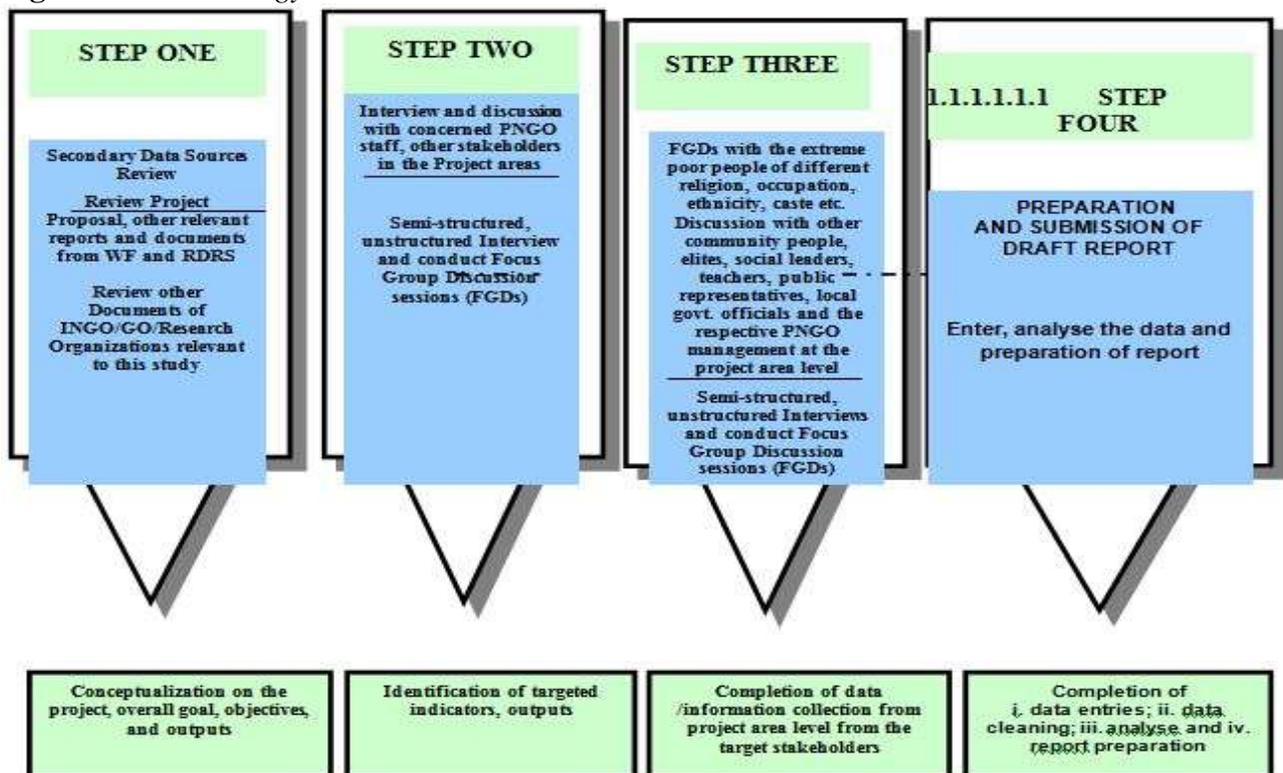
Findings and analysis

Experience of Social Exclusion in the Project Area

It has been tried out to find the status of socially excluded people at the project area. People from all segments have shared their experiences candidly. Findings from three different areas (Panchagarh, Kurigram- Char area and Rajshahi Barind Tract area) have been consolidated and those are furnished in the following table.

Table - 1: *The influence of state, market, society and family on the extreme poor (socially excluded people)* (*Views and experiences shared by the women and men participants in FGD sessions held in the project areas*)

Sectors	Supports provided for the hardcore poor	Usual form on the welfare and ways of exclusion
State	• Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) card	• Insufficient number of card in relation to number of distressed poor • Lacks fair selection process to provide card to really desired people, and in most cases cards are sanctioned for those who have resources (non-poor people)
	• Basic health services	• Poor quality, and fail to regulate the quality of private healthcare service providers • Access to government healthcare centres is not that easy
	• Primary education	• Irregular attendance of children and their dropout from school
	• Law and order	• Fails to uphold rights to land inheritance
Market	• Labour market	• Provides with poorly paid, casual work. • Very tough/unable to get regular work
	• Product market	• Sell goats, poultry birds, cows (if any) and other belongings for dowries, to meet expenditures in court cases (if any)
	• Insurance	• No health or life insurance
	• Health Services	• Services provide from healthcare centres do little for their health but dramatically depleted household assets
Society	• Charity	• Neighbours (rich men, land owners, farmers) not give food when someone begs and not even permit them to glean crops from their land, and as a result they have to go outside their own village
	• Religious Committee (in the Mosque /Temple /Church)	• Provides gifts, especially at Eid and other religious festivals
	• Informal loans	• Neighbours never provide loans to them
	• Village court	• In most cases cheat and compel them to abide by unfair judgment & thus greatly reduced their asset base
	• NGOs	• Usually do not provide financial support to them-

not a suitable client

Family (especially in case of women)	• Parents	• Unable to provide support as a divorced /separated/widow and poor. Parents feel a woman of this type as 'burden' of the family
	• Father /mother-in-law	• Greatly reduce their asset base, does not buy healthcare for them
	• Daughters and sons-in-law	• Not give value as they are so poor, have no asset
	• Other members (brother, uncle, nephew etc.)	• Scared to provide physical security, food loans and gifts. Make blockage from using VGD /old age card and discourage them from begging. If, in any case, they are provided cards, these members exploit them, and they don't get the real amount sanctioned for them

Identity of socially excluded people

FGD participants forthrightly revealed their experiences to identify the socially excluded people in their respective locations. From their viewpoints, following types of socially excluded have been primarily identified. *"I feel very unpleasant when you ask me how I would define my own situation. I cannot….(shrugs his shoulders), but I do know that I am poor" and so I have no place in this society. This world is a selfish land, with no place for the poor"……* at the time of discussion with a 40 year old day labourer in Kurigram field area, he expressed his position in this way. However, in order to identify types of socially excluded people, effort was put mainly during FGD sessions, through sharing experiences with the local people irrespective of socio-economic classes.

As a part of 'Rapid Assessment', quantitative figures regarding percentage of 'socially excluded' households in the project area have been put on the basis of the FGD participants' experiences. However, these figures have been validated with the respective PNGO management, local level government officials and public representatives at Union Parishad (UP) levels. These are depicted in the following table against each category of socially excluded people. These types of people are segregated with main three segments. These are: a) socio-economic condition; b) occupation; c) religion/caste with traditional occupation; d) physical condition and e) ethnicity.

In actuality, number of households with types of socially excluded people varies from area to area /village to village. It needs in-depth study (census type) to identify actual number of households of these types, specifically. It is also to be mentioned here that, besides the above identified households in a village, there are some areas where a village has ethnic people with 80% of total households of that village. This type of village situated in some particular upazilas like Baliadangi, Pirgonj, Haripur and Ranishankail in Thakurgaon district; Bochagonj, Kaharol and Birgonj in Dinajpur district; and Tanore, Godagari in Rajshahi district.

Table 2: *Distribution of households with socially excluded people*

Sl.	Type excluded people (community)	Percentage of household in a village by respective area			
		Panchagarh	Kurigram		Rajshahi
			Sadar upazila	Char area	
a. by socio-economic condition					
1	People excluded from any NGO /formal group in the village	10%	7% - 8%	3% - 4%	5% - 10%
2	Women (widow/separated/divorced)	15%	20%	20%	7% – 8%

	headed household and woman as the only earner				
3	Women eligible for receiving VGD card	7%	20%	30%	10%
4	Migrant people	<1%	3% - 5%	<1%	10%
5	Sexually violated/raped women	<1%	<2%	<1%	<1%
6	Drug addicted people	Na	na	na	na
b. by occupation					
7	Beggar	1%	4% - 5%	3% - 4%	2% - 3%
8	Sex worker	<1%	2% - 3%	na	na
9	Burglar	<1%	<2%	<1%	<1%
c. by religion/caste with traditional occupation					
10	Sweeper (Horizon- Hindu)	Na	<2%	na	na
11	Dom (people engaged in graveyard-Hindu)	Na	<1%	na	na
12	Dhulee (Traditional Drum player-Hindu /Muslim)	Na	<1%	na	na
13	Kulu (traditional oil crusher- Hindu /Muslim)	Na	na	na	<2%
14	Jhola (traditional weaver- Hindu /Muslim)	Na	na	na	<2%
15	Cobbler (Hindu /Muslim)	Na	na	na	<2%
16	Barber (Hindu /Muslim)	Na	na	na	na
17	Abdal (labourer, bone seller- Muslim)	Na	na	na	na
18	Mahali (do bamboo and cane work-Hindu/Muslim)	Na	na	na	na
d. by physical condition and person with diseases					
19	PWD (Person with disability)	2%	10%	2%	2%
20	HIV positive patient	Na	na	na	na
21	Leprosy patient	Na	3% - 4%	na	<2%
22	Old HH head, not able to work	Na	na	na	na
23	Androgynous (Hizra)	Na	na	na	na
e. by ethnicity					
24	Adivashi Household	<1%	-	-	20% - 30%

Root causes of social exclusion of the people

Ethnic woman group in Tanore upazila of Rajshai area described Adivashi's status in this ways, frustratingly. Socially excluded people in FGD sessions disclosed their status in above ways. In all three areas it has been experienced that the vulnerability situation is almost of same nature. However, according to religion/caste and ethnicity there are some differences in treating them 'untouchable'. Consolidating the experiences of the socially excluded people along with the opinions of other community people and PNGO staff, some key reasons of exclusion from the society have been identified as follows:

Table -3: *Key reasons of exclusion from the society in the areas*

Sl.	Reasons
1	They have no voice, no bargaining power
2	They have no assets (physical /material)
3	From a social point of view, they have no people (socially and politically powerful) behind them, and so others give them no value
4	They can be purchased with money easily, and others can use them in any situation. And so they don't need to be entwined with mainstream social systems
5	They themselves are keeping them isolated from the main society because of their own cultural system
6	People in general do not meet with the people with drug addiction, burglar and other ill-disciplined people
7	They feel inferior than other people in the society, and as a result they can't feel comfortable to join with others in the society
8	They are of different lower class people by religion, caste and by occupation, and so other people like to put them out of the main society
9	People don't like begging as a profession and avoid the beggars
10	People don't like migrant people and can never build trust on them to deal with

Employment opportunities in the areas

Employment opportunities for these socially excluded people are basically lying with agriculture activities in the area. Besides, some people those are involved in work as per their family tradition have work in their locality in a limited way. Most of them are barbers, cobblers, sweepers. Many of them have expressed to change their present occupation and like to work in crop fields, doing job in small business centres, industries etc. But there exists very little scope to avail those opportunities as they are not that much acceptable by the people in those sectors. However, in this study, considering agriculture as the main source of employment in this area, a seasonal matrix has been developed in consultation with the participants in four different study areas. Basically the poor people work in these crop fields as labourers.

" *We are not living. We are surviving* "- participants in FGD session in Boda upazila of Panchagarh district expressed their opinion in this way. Actually as per their hard labour in the field, they are not getting fair wages. Finding no way they have to just 'survive' their lives on this. Mainly men are engaged in this type of work. However, in ethnic community, women as well are involved in work, side by side with men. Following table depicts that in all three areas people have work during Bangla months *Jaisthya, Ashar, Agrahayan* and *Poush*. In *Sravbon, Magh* and in *Falgun* there are works for 15 - 20 days a month. The critical months are *Bhadra, Aswin, Kartik* and *Chaitra* months when the people lead their lives helplessly. Many of them, particularly men go outside their area in search of work, leaving their family vulnerable. It can be thought out to ensure employment in an alternative way to engage the people in these four months of the year. Interventions need to be developed in line with this situation in the respective areas.

Analytical views of inclusion of the socially excluded people
Inclusion of excluded groups

There are important insights to be drawn from the field findings about inclusion of socially excluded people and understanding of vulnerability and their strategies for managing portfolio of scare and often contested assets that are available to them. Families that lack certain key assets may not necessarily be poor, but nonetheless, may be extremely vulnerable in times of need or crisis. The PNGOs under this project also thought about the inclusion of marginal poor who would be potential to start interventions with their existing capacity. It has been observed that the ability to draw on assets in times of need by those people is directly dependent on the power relations governing these resources a number of levels, from the household to the formal institutional level.

There are often strong gender differences. The mobilization of assets almost by definition involves a negotiation of power and control over resources. In general, the poor tend to mention income only infrequently, relative to assets such as membership within kinship and social networks, health, labour, land, and other resources that make self-provisioning possible. In fact, idea of a secure livelihood is frequently more important than the incentive to maximize income.

Table- 4: *Employment situation in the area throughout the year (agriculture-based opportunities)*

Area	Degree of involvement in work by months [Scoring 1 – 10 (1 is the lowest score and 10 is the highest)]											
	April-May (Baisakh)	May-June (Jaistha)	June-July (Ashar)	July-Aug (sravan)	Aug-Sept (Bhadra)	Sep-Oct (Aswin)	Oct-Nov (Kartik)	Nov-Dec (Agra)	Dec-Jan (Poush)	Jan-Feb (Magh)	Feb-March (Falgun)	Mar-Apr (Chaitra)
Tahkurgaon-Panchagarh	9	9	7	6	2	1	3	10	10	4	5	2
Kurigram Sadar	2	10	8	8	2	2	2	10	8	6	6	1
Char Area	3	10	10	5	5	3	3	10	10	6	6	5
Rajshahi (Tanore)	3	10	8	8	8	5	3	10	10	6	6	1

This is not surprising, given the heightened vulnerability of poor people and poor communities to potentially devastating shocks that are beyond their control. These findings need to be considered carefully from a policy perspective. The findings provide compelling evidence that for many of the country's poor, monetary income is only a part of much broader array of potential assets. Because social relationships are an asset, and because the poor have weak bargaining power, the organizational capacity of poor people and quality of processes of intervention are critical.

A fundamental question guiding the analysis of this study is- What bars the poor /socially excluded people from gaining access to resources and opportunities? By listening to poor people and by tracing the processes that structure access and control of resources, we gain valuable insights into the role of institutional relationships in perpetuating conditions of poverty. In short, an understanding of the relationship between institutions and those they serve is critical to an understanding of how different social groups and actors secure different capabilities and entitlements. Rights, opportunities, and power- all of which institutions can sanction or restrict- play an important role in the extent to which people can successfully use institutions for accessing resources. Figure 3 presents these relations in diagrammatic form. Poor households access opportunities and resources through the medium of civil society and state institutional mechanisms. A poor person's access to opportunities is influenced not only by his or her relationships with institutions outside the household, but also by relationship within the household. The household plays a significant role in determining gender identity and gender-differentiated access to resources and opportunities.

Institutions and Access to resources
Table -5: *Institution Typology in the Project are***a**

State Institutions		Civil Society Institutions
Macro	Divisional /Departmental offices District Administration Judiciary	National level NGOs Religious and Ethnic Society Caste associations
Micro	Local Governments (UPs) Local Police Healthcare centres /Clinics Schools, Colleges Extension workers Traditional /social and religious authority	CBOs Neighbourhoods Kinship networks Traditional /Social leaders Local level NGOs Holy sites (Mosque /Temple /Church and other shrines)

In this regard the project would play a vital role to start the mechanism to establish the poor peoples' rights first from their respective homes. After attaining the capacity it would step forward to ensure access to respective departments (fisheries, local government cells, agriculture departments etc.), UPs, technical centres, private sectors through advocacy and counselling program initiatives. In doing that, important considerations would be made through assessing existing relationship patterns (one-way /two-way /weak relationship) with different sectors.

It is important to mention here that ownership of most of the rice fields are lying with rich people, farmers and elites of the community. It would not be so easy for the socially excluded people to have feasible fields from them to use for fingerling production. In that respect it needs to motivate the land owner and as well as to show benefits so that they would be agree to participate in materializing this new intervention. In this regard role of PNGOs is very vital to work in favour of the target beneficiaries and if needed, these organizations would also play role as guarantor on behalf of those beneficiaries. As per the approach mentioned in the project proposal, they could also be work in 'group' (like in RDRS they would be under FFSs and Union Federations; in ACD they will do work under its normal group; same approach would be followed in other two PNGOs.

Figure- 2: *Institutions and Access to Opportunities*
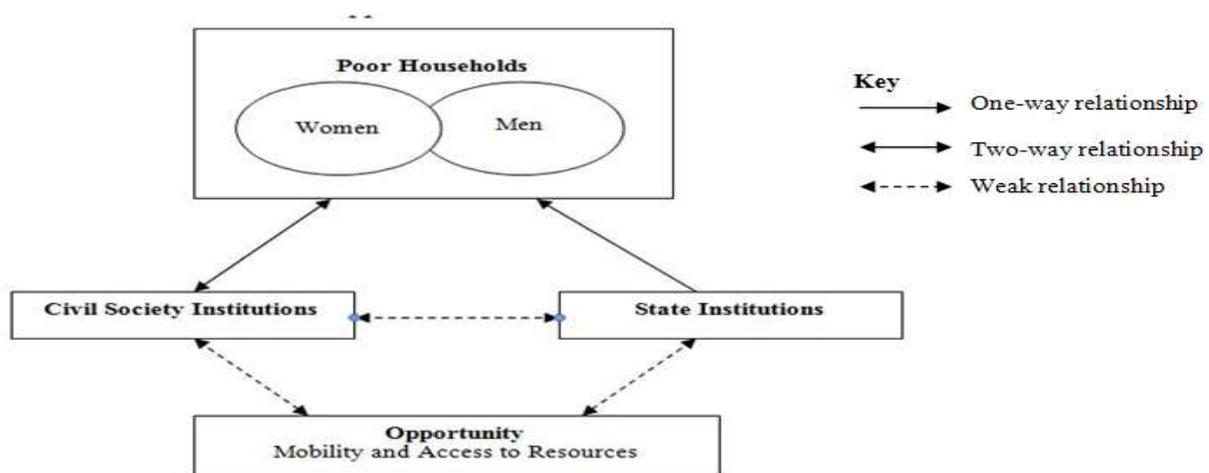
Source: Developed by authors

Inclusion of women in particular

In their desperation to keep family together and to provide food for their children, poor women like to be emerged in the informal sector despite the risk and discrimination they face. In the FGD session, women showed their every courage to work in the field. Now it is very much important to coup the interventions with their situation at individual, at their household and at group level. As per their opinion there are lots of scopes to involve them in work at field. However, they also pointed out the issue of ensuring participation of other community people, local elites and opinion leaders during planning sessions and at the time of implementation of the project activities. Without the community's participation it would be difficult to initiate new intervention with rice fish culture in the area. The consultant feels it very rational to consider the issue importantly.

Involvement of women in all development initiatives including agriculture is seen as a priority in the national development paradigm. Traditionally, women have played a major role in agriculture. Various studies show that 43% of rural women are contributing to agriculture and fisheries-related activities besides performing their household responsibilities. After fulfilling their traditional responsibilities in the household, women can simultaneously be involved pond fisheries activities. This enables their male counterpart to work elsewhere, and women to supplement the family income. In Bangladesh, women have proven to be competent in adopting fish culture technologies, despite the fact that their role in fish culture growth has not been sufficiently recognized and remains inadequately addressed. To ensure sustainability in fish culture, it is necessary to understand related issues and develop gender sensitive interventions. In the project area it has been experienced that the women are involved in fish culture activities in their own houses. During FGD session in Tanore upazila under Rajshahi district, some ethnic women have disclosed that they have had training on fish culture provided by CARITAS, but it has not been possible to involve in fish culture activities even after receiving training. This also indicates that women in this area already have their willing ness to involve in fish culture activities.

Lands adjacent to the homestead remains water logged for three to six months in a year. These lands are situated close to the rural households. Normally, these lands/ditches remain unutilized. In addition to using rice fields for fingerlings production, these fallow lands can also be prepared for fingerlings production and fish cultivation by using a proper method of treatment and cleaning, these. Seasonal ponds can be economically profitable, as the land becomes fertile with the homestead organic waste and often after inundation of floodwater. With nominal investment and labour by the family members, these water bodies could be used for fish cultivation. Various species of fish like *Puntius sarana, Oreochromis nilotica* can be cultivated in these types of water bodies. The investment is affordable and the work does not require much labour. Women therefore can conveniently embark in such ventures. Although women's contribution is well recognized in agriculture-related activities, their contribution in economic activities remains unvalued due to patriarchal and traditional norms. Reduction or eradication of these constraints could lead to increased productivity, resulting in an enhanced economic welfare, particularly for rural poor families.

Capacity enhancement and consequential project benefits

In general term, socially excluded people can't think them as potential to participate in a program related to social, economic or political issue. A person from this segment expresses in this way:
"For a poor person everything is terrible- illness, humiliation, shame. We are cripples; we are afraid of everything; we depend on everyone. No one needs us. We are like garbage that everyone wants to get rid of "....a day labourer in Thakurgaon articulated his position in the society like this.

It is very much important for a development organization, first to build up confidence of those people on their life before starting a new program designed for them at field level. This is an important role of the project to develop their capacity at this micro level. When facilitated in the

FGD session, the poor men and women have easily identified their inbuilt capacity, which they have listed as follows: We have our- courage; physical strength /stamina to work hard; satisfied with small amount; creative and enthusiastic to create a new thing; attentive in learning process
We don't have-land; other physical asset; money; technical know how; access to resource centres /markets

Taking into account the above strengths and weaknesses, the socially excluded people will be provided necessary capacity building initiatives /training as to gain advocacy and counselling skill, networking skill and technical skill to run the project activities effectively and efficiently. The proposed project has the potential scopes to generate employment for the socially excluded people. All these people are very enthusiastic to do work as they realize that the concerned PNGOs would include them in diversified income generation activities. Fingerlings production at rice fields is a seasonal activity and it is possible to earn income within short period of time. In addition, if feasible, the same people will involve in seasonal fish culture program in the small water bodies/ditches by the sides of rice fields and adjacent to their homesteads. When discussed, people from all levels accepted the idea promisingly. In particular, by undertaking fisheries activities, beneficiaries can contribute to the family income considerably; generate an opportunity for self-employment; uplift their overall socio-economic condition; and become more skilled. In addition to financial benefits, it is hereby expected that the primary beneficiaries of this project would develop capacity at their individual level, as well as in institution level. Ultimately, once they would develop them as 'technically resourceful' and thus it would be possible to establish their position at the society level, dignifiedly. Nevertheless, it is also a precondition that the respective PNGOs will continue their support to these people and include them in their mainstreaming development programs as core partners, even after the end of this project. Sustainability issue is very much related with this approach.

Conclusion

It is imperative that to accelerate its development initiative, an under-developed country like Bangladesh needs to unleash the full potential of the poor people those are normally excluded from the society. Within this segment, women's role has also to be recognized perfectly. A social transformation must be engineered by changing power relations within the household and society. To achieve this, the Government and its development partners need to re-orient their programmes and implement an effective affirmative action for these people. This project will bring the potential scope to capacitate the people and thus to create their noble status in the society. Rural poor play an important role in the fisheries sector of Bangladesh. This role encompasses social and economic activities and duties, both within and outside the family, including marketing, processing and also harvesting fishery products. Development initiatives over the last few decades clearly show that sustained improvements in productivity and in people's lives depend upon the recognition of the crucial role the poor people including the women play in production, processing and marketing in this sector in the country. In relation to the above facts, some inputs on project designing and implementation process are important to incorporate in the respective sections.

a). At project design level, some sections need to be rationalized and strengthened. These are:
- Develop Log frame
- Provision to be made to conduct thorough baseline survey at the beginning of the project
- Strategy on technology transfer needs to be clarified rationally
- Participation of community people, local government department and private sectors need to be ensured and prioritized authentically
- Monitoring strategy needs to be further elaborated, in relation to outcome and output indicators

- Project Exit Strategy needs to be more elucidated. Role of PNGOs also to be made clear in this case

b). At the activity implementation level, the project needs to consider the following crucial factors as to accomplish target activities effectively.

- Optimum utilization of rice field is the single important factor. Therefore, measures need to be taken to ensure target beneficiaries' full entitlement to land use. Conducive and time befitting policies should be adopted enabling target beneficiaries to have easy access to land use for fingerling production.

- The existing extension services should be revamped so that the extension workers /technical workers can reach the beneficiaries including women who are engaged in fisheries activities. The project authority, especially the PNGOs should consider different needs of the beneficiaries and provide technological solutions. Women engaged in fisheries-related projects should be given opportunities while farm trials and research is undertaken.

- While designing a programme, it must be ensured that women are given equal rights and opportunities to actively participate in the programs. There should not be any element in the program that hinders the participation of women. Therefore, programme designing should be gender-sensitive.

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