

## **Impact of Monga on Rural Urban Migration: Its Socio- Economic Consequences**

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### **Abstract**

*The term 'Monga' is purely a local term which affects the people of northern Bangladesh regularly during a particular period of the year. A great deal of misconception and misinterpretation prevails among the academics in defining the Monga syndrome in northern Bangladesh. The misunderstanding of the Monga revolves mainly around famine condition, food security or insecurity based on a preconceived notion that hardly takes into account the characteristic connotation of the term as it prevails in the affected area. While attempting to explain the relation between Monga and migration this paper establishes the linkages between the Monga and poverty. This paper defines Monga and migration and emphasis that migration is the result of Monga and for this migration people of North Bengal face some socio-economic consequences.*

**Key words:** Domestic violence, Famine, Food security/insecurity, Hunger, Migration, Monga, Rural-Urban migration, Trafficking, Socio-economic consequences.

### **Introduction**

Migration is a common phenomenon in a developing country. It is a random process in continuance of a country. However, the purposes of migration are many such as education, business, residence, works or high ambitions etc. The Oxford Dictionary meaning of migration is movement of large number of people from one place to another for want of work. So a person is called migrant when he moves from one place to another in order to find out work. Migration may be internal and external. Internal migration involves men, women and children, and it includes rural to rural, urban to rural, urban to urban and rural to urban flows (Afsar, 2005). However, the scope of this study is to discuss the internal or domestic migration of a definite region that is of North Bengal in Bangladesh. Most of the time in North Bengal migration takes place for *Monga* or want of food.

*Monga* is a local term specially used in northern part of Bangladesh, which means 'ovab' or a 'seasonal food crisis'. Almost every year, the northwestern part of Bangladesh mostly greater Rangpur is hit by this seasonal famine-like situation locally called '*Monga*' and literally termed as 'Mora Kartic'. This situation occurs during the Bengali months of Ashwin and Kartic (mid September to mid November), a period between transplantation and harvest of *Aman* paddy. The people of North Bengal are mostly familiar with this problem. And particularly *Monga* is the local term of northern part of Bangladesh. The reasons of migration are many and *Monga* is one

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such cause of migration in North Bengal. The main object of this article is to examine how the *Monga* contributes to the migration in North Bengal. This paper also analyzes the term *Monga* and its impact on the people of North Bengal and particularly internal migration. This paper also focuses on the consequences of migration on social sector of those *Monga* - affected areas.

### **Methodology**

This paper is a research work, which is based on a huge secondary sources as well as on the result of field visits in some *Thanas* of Joypurhat and Naogaon districts among the people from *Monga* affected area who migrated to those districts. This involved collection and study of relevant books, journals, reports, unpublished documents and also reviewing reports of major national newspapers. Quantitative data were derived from the government sources, like the Bangladesh Population Census reports (1981, 1991 and 2001), Statistical Year Book (2001), working papers of the BIDS and other relevant reports. To examine the socio-economic consequences of the *Monga* situation, some **case studies** of migrant people from the *Monga*-prone area were also undertaken.

### **Definition of *Monga* and migration**

*Monga* is very hard to define, as it is a local term. The literal meaning of *Monga* in English is much more difficult. If we call it poverty then the meaning of *Monga* will be narrow, better it should be called a regular seasonal famine. However, *Monga* has been defined in various ways. According to the largest Non-Government Organization (NGO) PKSF (Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation), '*Monga*' is a seasonal famine-like situation or seasonal shortfall that occurs every year in varying degrees of intensity during the Bangla months of Ashwin and Kartik (mid-September to mid-November) in the north of Bangladesh, especially in the Greater Rangpur region, covering Kurigram, Gaibandha, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari and Rangpur districts' (PKSF, 2007).

Like-wise, the oldest NGO working in northern Bangladesh, the Rangpur-Dinajpur Rural Services (RDRS) describes it as '... a famine-like situation in which the poor suffer acute deprivation caused by their lack of purchasing power arising from seasonal scarcity of gainful employment' (RDRS, 2006). '*Monga* is seasonal food insecurity in ecologically vulnerable and economically weak parts of northwestern Bangladesh, primarily caused by an employment and income deficit before *Aman* is harvested. It mainly affects those rural poor, who have an un-diversified income that is directly or indirectly based on agriculture' (Zug, 2006). During the Bangla months of Ashwin and Kartik (i.e. mid-September to mid-November) the marginal and landless farmers face an economic crisis. This stems from the lack of non-agricultural employment opportunities since it is the agricultural-inclined region. 'This incident is called the *Monga*, a near-famine situation results in severe food crisis for the people of the northern part of Bangladesh' (Hasan et. al. 2005). Rahman et. al. (2007) defines *Monga* as 'hunger and famine-like situation (that) prevails in north-western regions particularly during the lean season as the poorest do not have access to livelihoods and work'. They also emphasize it as seasonal chronic food shortage among the absolute poor in the selected northern districts of Bangladesh, which is

one of the major indicators how acute poverty exists in the country. It is hard to define *Monga* but easier to understand. However, when persons are unable to meet their basic necessities including food, cloths etc. and they can not fulfill these necessities by any other means, we can say *Monga* is prevailing. '*Monga* is a local term used to indicate acute deprivation caused due to erosion of purchasing power from lack of gainful employment opportunities.' Similarly, according to the Social Development Foundation (SDF), '*Monga* is seasonal scarcity of employment and hence reduction in income leading to lack of food amongst mainly rural hard-core poor families ([http://www.scfbd.org/sdf\\_prog\\_mmippl.asp](http://www.scfbd.org/sdf_prog_mmippl.asp)).

The synonymous words of migration are resettlement, relocation or movement from one place to another. It may be within a country or outside a country. Migration has been aptly called the "missing link" in current development policies (Afsar, 2005). Rural-Urban migration is a flexible and dynamic phenomenon that encompasses territorial mobility of the people and involves movements like commuting, absence from home place for periods from a couple of days to several years, seasonal migration and permanent relocation. Although diversified in forms, it involves a certain degree of commitment on the part of migrants to the place of origin and of destination. Migration is one of the vital forces that contribute to rapid urbanization generally associated with higher levels of productivity and development. (banglapedia.com.bd). Migration is the movement of persons from one country or locality to another.

Much of the earlier literature on migration has been preoccupied with 'development-induced' economic migration which resulted from unequal development trajectories (Mc Dowell and De Haan, 1997; Kothari, 2002). This supposedly led to one-way population movements from less endowed areas to well-endowed prosperous areas through the 'push' created by poverty and a lack of work and the 'pull' created by better wages in the destination (Lee, 1966). Theories of urban expansion were in agreement with this analysis of migration. Ideas of seasonal and circular labour migration were first articulated in the 1970s (Nelson, 1976; Rao, 1994) and defined as 'characteristically short term, repetitive or cyclical in nature, and adjusted to the annual agricultural cycle'. This view challenged the linear model of migration as well as theories of urban expansion.

There are different definitions and explanations for the motivation that compels people to migrate. At one extreme there is 'involuntary' migration. This denotes extreme economic and often social hardships, and is undertaken mostly by landless or land-poor, unskilled and illiterate poor labourers. Here people do not have any choice of the place or type of work that they undertake. Migration for survival is well documented in Ramana Murthy, 1991; Reddy, 1990; Rao, 1994. Nearly all of the studies have identified the main drivers of migration as the worsening situation of dry land agriculture created by drought, crop failure and poor terms of trade. More recently, the idea of migration as a coping strategy (Davies, 1996) is gaining acceptance. This is migration that is integral to people's coping, survival and livelihood strategies (Rao, 2001; Conroy et. al. 2001; Mosse et. al. 2002) and not just a response to emergencies. So migration is the movement of people for extreme economic hardship and social hazards for which they are capable to continue their own residue in their original place.

### Geographical Delimitation of *Monga*

The districts of Nilphamari, Rangpur, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram and Gaibandha, which together form the Greater Rangpur, are most frequently regarded as the *Monga* affected districts. A Review the spatio-temporal pattern (2005-2006) of the *Monga*

**Table 1: Estimated households and population affected by *Monga***

Information sources	Affected households (Number)	Affected population (in million)
CARE survey	540,389	2.43
RDRS survey	91677	0.41
Media survey	324,444	1.46

Sources: RDRS, 2006

situation of the Greater Rangpur district reveals that the most vulnerable upazilas to the *Monga* disaster are: Jaldhaka, Kishoreganj, Gangachara, Kaunia, Fulchhari, Sundarganj, Pirgachha, Ulipur, Kurigram Sadar, Chilmari and few others (Table 2). In these upazilas more than a million people are directly or indirectly affected by the *Monga*.

**Table 2: Identification of affected upazila in different Districts of**

District Name Names of	Names of Severely Affected Upazila	Names of Moderately Affected Upazila	Total Area	Total Upajila	Total Monga Affected Population	Total Monga Affected Population (%)
<b>Kurigram</b>	Chilmari	Bhurungamari	276.45sq. km.	9	177,239	53.97
	Rajibpur	Kurigram Sadar				
	Raomari	Nageshwari				
	Ulipur	Rajarhat				
		Phulbari				
<b>Lalmonirhat</b>	Aditmari	Lalmonirhat Sadar	1241.46sq.km.	5	109,872	48.83
	Hatibandha	Patgram				
	Kaliganj					
<b>Nilphamari</b>	Dimla	Domar	1640.91sq. km	6	58,922	43.19
	Jaldhaka	Nilphamari Sadar				
	Kishoreganj	Saidpur				
<b>Rangpur</b>	Badarganj	Mithapukur	2307.78sq.km.	8	72,473	53.13
	Gangachhara	Pirganj				
	Kaunia	Rangpur Sadar				
	Pirgacha	Taraganj				
<b>Gaibandha</b>	Gaibandha Sadar	Gobindaganj	2179.27sq.km.	7	122,662	42.33
	Phulchhari	Palashbari				
	Sughatta	Sadullapur				
	Sundarganj					

Source: Survey by DER in 2004 and 2001 population census (BBS, 2005).

The primarily affected upazilas of these districts are those along the banks of Teesta and Jamuna Rivers. Roughly 7 percent of the total population in Bangladesh (about 9.6 million people) inhabit these districts and about 5.3 million of those live below the poverty line (HIES, 2005). *Monga* hits Kurigram, Rungpur, Lalmonirhat, Gaibandha and Nilphamary districts every year. Some *upazilas* of these districts are severely affected by *Monga* each year (Fig. 2). *Monga* is now very common in the northern districts of Bangladesh. It becomes a regular phenomenon in northern part of our country.

### Relation between Migration and *Monga*

Except in cases of forced migration due to political or ecological factors, all evidence suggests that it is not the poorest who move. There appears to be a level of poverty below which migration is not possible (Arlacchi, 1983). The move itself requires some resources, not just the cost of the passage, but also to support the migrant at the destination until either friends or regular or part-time employment can meet those expenses. The most important discussion of this part is migration of people from the poorest level and not from upper class and high skill class. However, the poorest migrate often as an extreme survival strategy, suggesting that when they migrate, this is likely to be less beneficial than the migration by the better off.

**Table 3: Socio-economic indicators of the *Monga*-prone districts, (1991-2000)**

Name of the indicator	Gaibandha	Nilphamary	Rungpur	Lalmonirhat	Kurigram	Bangladesh (Average)
Population Density(perSqkm)	890	1067	988	977	768	881
Activity Rate(%)	52.80	51.90	49.90	35.60	51.80	48.10
Rural population(%)	92.94	86.24	83.29	89	85.90	83.80
Urban population(%)	7.05	13.70	16.70	10.99	14.05	15.70
Agriculture labor force(%)	74	71.80	69.30	77.50	77	61.70
Non-agriculture labor force(%)	18.30	19.50	23.40	16.80	15.30	25.90
Others labor force(%)	7.30	6.20	7.10	5.50	7.50	10.10
Poverty(HCI)	50.10	50.10	50.10	50.10	50.10	42.70
Landlessness(%)	40	42	45	43	40	25.50
Calorie Intake(d/p/p)	2210	2210	2210	2210	2210	2234
Dependency Ratio(%).	59.00	55.50	55.20	56.60	59.20	53.70

Source: BBS, 1991; BBS, 1994a; BBS, 1994b; BBS, 1997; BBS, 1999; BBS, 2001.

Evidence exists that migration by the poorest may reinforce exploitative structures like debt-bondage relationships. People from the poorest areas often do not have access to the most rewarding opportunities, in urban areas or abroad, though they may migrate to activities nearby, for seasonal agricultural and less rewarding work. Also survival strategies may mean that migration from the poorest households will include younger, more vulnerable family members. Now if we analyze the socio economic conditions of *Monga* prone area we can find out the relation between *Monga* and migration. Socioeconomic condition of the *Monga* prone areas includes a number of social and economic characteristics, like, land, population and household characteristics, activity rate, occupation, poverty, nutrition status etc. They are discussed below:

Land ownership- Land holding is mostly uneven in the *Monga*-prone areas. The percentage of landless people is very high in the *Monga*-prone area. According to Table 3, it is seen that the *Monga* prone districts have higher percentage of landlessness than national average, which is only 25.5. On the other hand *Monga*-prone districts have above 40 percent of landlessness. It indicates that the landlessness is one of the main issues of *Monga* situation.

Population and Household- Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries of the world with around 881 people living in a square kilometer of land. The rate of population growth is 1.54 percent (BBS, 2004). Table 3 also indicates that the *Monga*-prone districts have higher population density than national average.

Occupation- Labor force structure is considered into three categories- Agricultural Labour Force (ALF), Non-Agricultural Labour Force (NALF) and others. Agricultural labor forces are very high in the *Monga* prone districts, but the non-agriculture labour forces are low in such areas, the others' category also shows the lower percentage of labor force. Table 3 indicates that the average agricultural labor force in Bangladesh is 61.79, the *Monga*-prone districts have higher agricultural labor force than the national average. The average national non-agricultural labor force is 25.9, but the *Monga*-prone districts have much less NALF than that average. The same is also found in the other category also. Thus the occupational pattern indicates that there is little scope of non-agricultural activities in such areas, which mostly affects the *Monga* affected people. Dependency on agriculture also limits in employment diversification to a great extent.

Activity Rate and Dependency Ratio- According to the Table 3, the activity rate is very low in the *Monga*-prone areas while the national average activity rate is 48.10, the activity rates of some of the *Monga*-prone districts have comparatively lower than national average (Table 3). The *Monga*-prone districts have higher dependency ratio compared to the national average (Table 3), which indicates that the children and aged people are relatively more affected than others.

**Table 4: GDP of the Districts of *Monga* Prone Area (1999/2000)**

Districts	Per capita GDP (In taka)	Per capita GDP (% Of national average)	Manufacturing (category of the GDP) (In taka)	Manufacturing (category of the GDP) (%Of national Average)
Gaibandha	12444	67. 2	400	14. 7
Kurigram	13757	74. 3	341	12. 5
Lalmonirhat	13855	74. 8	254	9. 3
Nilphamari	13292	71. 8	263	9. 7
Rangpur	14936	80. 5	820	30.1
Bangladesh	18511	100. 0	2720	100. 0

Source: BBS, 2004.

Rural-Urban differences- In Bangladesh, rural-urban differences are a common scenario, which is also found in the *Monga*-prone areas. From Table 3 it may be seen that the proportions of rural population in the *Monga*-prone areas are higher than the national average and those of urban population are considerably lower. Such a condition affects the entire development activities in the region.

Calorie intake- The spatial distribution of the calorie intake pattern of Bangladesh indicates that the *Monga*-prone districts belong to the medium category of intake. It is also found from Table 3 that the *Monga*-prone districts have lesser calorie intake than that of national average. It indicates that the malnutrition exists in the *Monga*-prone areas.

Poverty- According to the human poverty index 2003, the *Monga* prone areas are considered as having high poverty syndrome than other areas of Bangladesh, whereas the national average poverty index is 42.7, the *Monga*-prone districts have higher poverty index than that of national average, which is 50.1 (Table 3). It means the *Monga*-prone areas have more poverty problem than the other parts of the country.

As no comprehensive study on a regional comparison concerning economy is available, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) can give a rough guideline. Table 4 shows that the per capita GDP of these districts is far below the national average and the per capita income of Gaibandha district a *Monga*-prone area is the lowest in whole Bangladesh.

As most of the definitions of migration express about the economic hardship and movement of people, it is very clear that migration occurs for the reason of poverty and *Monga* means extreme poverty of the people of greater Rungpur. The people of *Monga*-affected areas migrate to the other parts of Bangladesh. That is the only internal migration is available in *Monga* affected area. The reason is mainly extreme poverty and they cannot bear the transport cost. Sometimes migration takes place only in *Monga* season and people go back to their home at the end of this season. But many times people who are landless and also houseless migrate forever. The '*monga* region' is economically weaker than other regions.

Above all about the scenario of socio- economic condition of *Monga* prone area we can say that as a whole the *Monga* prone districts are considered as backward districts which bring the underdevelopment in the entire area and make it an economically unprivileged region and in each area people live in struggle and hardship. And their low income, lack of land ownership and density of population persuade them easily to migrate to other places of the country. Thus *Monga*- migration relationship is drawn and *Monga* is a cause of migration in North Bengal. The proper scenario of migration is seen in the daily newspapers of *Monga* period. Thus in November 2004 *Monga* threatened large parts of North West Bangladesh. The newspapers contained stories of thousands of people in the districts of Rangpur, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Gaibandha and Nilphamari who were virtually starving for days together due to want of job and food'. This was not an unusual occurrence; in most years' a time of scarcity follows the end of the monsoon in October and November. People's response to this crisis, to move to other places in search of work, was not unusual either; for many of Bangladesh's 140 million inhabitant's work temporarily (The Daily Independent, 2004).

**Table: 5 Migration from *Monga* affected households in different districts of greater Rangpur region.**

Districts	Sample number (Household)	Migration (%)
Lalmonirhat	90,122	24.75
Kurigram	121,419	41.68
Gaibandha	113,930	61.86
Nilphamari	58,833	50.36
Rangpur	51,590	27.28
Overall	435,894	41.19

Source: PRIME Baseline Survey, 2006

Actually the ultimate number of *Monga* affected migrated people is still unknown. However, Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) has launched its programmed efforts in 2006 named Programmed Initiatives for *Monga* Eradication (PRIME), which made a survey of migration from greater Rungpur (Table-5). From Table 5 we can understand that the overall migration of North Bengal was 41% in the year of 2006. Thus migration is a very common strategy of the people of North Bengal. According to Table 5, migration from *Monga* affected area is about 41%. So more than one third population of *Monga* affected area migrate to suitable places.

According to Disaster and Emergency Response (DER) Group, one of the most important effects of *Monga* is migration (especially of men) to other places i.e. less affected rural areas or to major cities (DER meeting, 2004). They found that in *Monga* prone area most of the male member's of a family migrated to other places for earning in the lean season. Again PRIME in its baseline survey in 2006 identified migration as the major strategy of coping with *Monga*. However, this migration only happens at the time of *Monga*. Most of the people in North Bengal are very simple and not highly ambitious. They are happy if they can earn their livelihood. For this when the *Monga* is over, they run off to their own place. Though they can check their poverty a little bit by migration to other places, there are also some unfortunate socio-economic consequences for this migration.

### **Socio-Economic Consequences**

It is very common that migration has its positive impact on society by reducing poverty. Migration contributes to the eradication of poverty also (Afsar, 2005). Whilst poverty as a determinant of migration is often debated in migration literature, the role of migration in reducing poverty is not the subject matter of this paper. The main connotation of this part is to focus on some socio-economic consequences which are the outcome of internal migration of our country. Like in many other developing countries, our government policy on the whole fails to address the reality of a changing rural landscape, rapid urbanization and the contribution to both made by rural-urban migration in Bangladesh (Afsar, 2003a). Poverty can induce migration in many ways, most notably because of the shortage of year-round employment, limited land ownership, gender-specific constraints and ecological vulnerability etc. The impact of *Monga* is migration and when migration is continuing, some consequences are found in our society. The following consequences are very common phenomena in North Bengal.

**Trafficking and Prostitution-** Trafficking is the most serious problem in North Bengal of Bangladesh and the rate is very high. Because of the hidden nature of this crime of trafficking, reliable statistics are hard to come out. Despite various efforts to check human trafficking at various levels, between 10,000 and 20,000 women and children are trafficked from Bangladesh every year. Girls from villages are trafficked, the majority of whom are under 18 years, who are trafficked for \$ 1000 and are sold to brothels / prostitutions for sex industry. Human trafficking is not confined only to the sex industry. In Bangladesh children (aged about 4 to 15 years) are also largely trafficked:

- To work in the " Three D - Jobs" , i.e. dirty , difficult and dangerous as bonded or forced labour ;
- To use the body parts of children, such as Kidney etc.
- To send them to Arab Gulf countries for using them as “Camel Jockeys (Race)”, where they face a life of danger, misery and loneliness.
- And the women who are trafficked are engaged in many brothels in places outside our country and also inside our country. And because of its secret nature the number of total trafficked prostitutes cannot be properly determined. In North Bengal, the open border area with India tends to trafficking at large. And people when they face extreme poverty, are easily trafficked for work and for food. In the name of migration women and children are trafficked.

**Polygamy-** When men are migrated to other region of the country they sometimes settle in that place and marry there. As he is a stranger nobody knows about him. And for this reason he can marry again in this new place where he is migrated. If he is already married, it is after a long time everybody knows about his first wife and children if any.

**Case Study - 1**

Masuda Begum

(Age: 35)

**District: Joypurhat**

Masuda is 35 years old. She married Mujibor Rahman about 20 years ago. Mujibor Rahman, who is an inhabitant of the Domar thana, migrated to Akkelpur Thana in the district of Joypurhat. After two years of working as a labour in the furniture shop, he agreed to marry a deaf and dumb girl Masuda Begum with the dowry of a piece of land. They were a happy couple with three daughters and one son. But after 15 years of her marriage Masuda and her family came to know that Mujibor was already married and had two sons. Masuda can not do anything now because a proper investigation about Mujibor was impossible before her marriage for reason of the complexity of the way.

*Source: Personal interview with Masuda Begum in Akkelpur 7<sup>th</sup> July 2009.*

**Domestic Violence-** The most vulnerable categories of the *Monga*-affected area are women and children. When any family is migrated to other areas the women and the children face domestic violence in the absence of their near relatives. In some cases, the violence is very severe but there is no solution to this torture. Beating, rebuking, kicking etc. are common forms of domestic violence among them. Every time these types of violence are arbitrated by the village heads who are not in favour of the migrated people. The story of Rokaya is that type of a story in which a migrated woman lost her son, husband, family, social status and a profession.

**Case Study - 2**

Story of Rokeya Banu (Age- 28)

**District: Kurigram**

Rokaya Banu, is an inhabitant of Cilmary Thana Kurigram District. She migrated with her uncle named Shahajahan (55) to a village name Santa in Akkelpur Thana. At first she was a servant in a family. After some months she was married with a lunatic person of that village named Sukra who was known as a mad man in the village. However, Rokeya had another four sister and two brothers. This history of Rokeya is well known of that village because of domestic violence. After two months of her marriage, her husband started beating her and he used to beat her regularly because no one is left to save that girl. At the last moment her husband charged her adultery with a man of that village named Sona Mia. She was punished to leave the village, her son and her husband and also with forty durra by the village arbitrator. On the same day of her Salish, she left the village forever. Only one family was in favour of that girl in whose family she was a servant but for the fear of the village head they were also kept silent. The husband (Sukra) turned into fully mad now. His relatives captured his house also. His one son Robin who is seven years old turned into a beggar of that village.

*Source: Personal interview with Rokeya Banu in Jamalung (Akkelpur), 7<sup>th</sup> July 2009.*

**Social Status-** Migrated people do not enjoy equal status with the people of the native village. It is a matter of fact that they are called *uttara* (northern people) or *bideshi* (foreigner) and native people always avoid mixing with them. They are socially hated and ignored. They are socially excluded from the natives. Even native beggars do not show interest to get their sons or daughters married with the migrated people though the migrated people buy land in the new place and are much well off than the native people.

**Increase of Criminal activities-** When people migrate to a new place, they would involve in criminal activities easily. A petty criminal offence like theft is very common practice among the migrated people. Besides when they face *Monga* and starving continuously they forget their sense of right or wrong and they do anything like theft, dacoity, killing, kidnapping, smuggling etc. But they are not habitual criminals at all. At the time of *Monga* they lose their normal sense and do those activities. The people of *Monga* area are simply engaged in theft, dacoity smuggling etc. activities. But the new dimension of criminal activities is that the young and unemployed people, who have no other alternative of earning a livelihood, are allured to join *jongi* politics. They have received training and already participated in different *jongi* operations and programmes throughout the country. It is through joining these militant organisations that they ensure financial gain and save and improve their fate. A Bengali daily on 21.09.05 published an exclusive report saying *Monga* (famine) creates Jongis. The report discussed the issue at length giving important details. In Saghata *upazila* there are some 71 *madrashas*, where there are only 22 schools and colleges. Most of these *madrashas* were founded to patronize as well as promote *jongi* activities in that area and other parts of the country. It is learnt that out of 102 listed *jongi* terrorists, about 35 of them live in Gaibandha (newagebd.com).

### Case Study - 3

Sukurjan (Age 56)

#### Districts-Lalmonrhat

Sukurjan lived with her husband and two sons in Hatibandha Thana of Lalmonirhat district. Her two sons were four years and three years old. Sukurjan's husband was a day labour. About forty years ago when their area affected by *Monga* severely her husband lost his work and could not manage their meal. Sukurjan and her two sons were starving for two days. Her husband was looking for a work in Lalmonirhat. Above six days later when he back to his house he found his wife only and not his children. Sukurjan took her two children to the Tista river and dropped them in the flow of water to avoid their crying for rice. After hearing so her husband became mad and left their village. The helpless Sukurjan could not tell this story anyone without her brother. And one night her brother took her firstly on a boat and then reached a station (She does not know the name of the station) and left her on a train to save her from police. After two days she reached a station named Santaher Junction. She decided to allow a break at her journey and stay that station. After a long day a wife of jamindar of Farsipara at Nogaon saw her and took Sukurjan with her.

Source: Personal interview with Sukurjan in Naogaon, 9<sup>th</sup> July 2009.

**Increase of Begging-** In a survey by PRIME on 2005 the percentage of beggar of *Monga* affected area is found total 0.69 and the number of beggar is increasing at an alarming rate in those areas. Even when these people migrate they go on begging in the new place.

**Sale of Child-** Crushed by poverty, sometime a mother was compelled to sell her one-month-old daughter. The incident that occurred on the premises of Satkhira collectorate comes five days after her husband's death. Abdur Razzak, a day-labourer of Benla village under Assassuni *upazila*, died leaving his wife Salma Khatun with three daughters. Unable to arrange meals for her daughters, Salma decided to sell the youngest one, Parvin Akhtar. Hearing the news, Abdul Mazed, son of Nasiruddin of Khanpur village under Shyamnagar *upazila*, came forward to buy

#### Case Study - 4

Majeda Bibi (Age- 40)

#### Districts-Gaibandha

Majeda is a poor woman lived in Gaibandha Sadar with her four daughters. In 1993 she migrated in Naogaon District from Gaibandha with her husband who was a day labour. But after migration her husband turned to a rickshaw puller in Naogaon town and she became a seller of vegetables. Majeda was very happy with their four daughters but her happiness did not stay long. Suddenly her husband fell ill in 1995 and could not pull rickshaw. She was in a grave poverty situation to meet the family necessities and also to bear the medical expenses of her husband. Without finding any other alternatives she decided to give adoption of her youngest daughter who is only six months of age. Her neighbor managed a couple who was childless and wanted to take a child as *palok* (adopted). In the name of *palok* actually they bought that child because they paid 2000Tk for that child. And the mother has sold her six month child because till now in every Eid festival she gets a big amount of money from that childless couple.

Source: Personal interview with Majeda Bibi in Naogaon, 9<sup>th</sup> July 2009.

the baby. Salma went to a notary public in Satkhira and made an affidavit on selling Parvin to Mazed for Tk 300. Salma said she intended to use the money to buy clothes for her other two daughters. Mazed said that he bought the child as he had no one of his own, adding he will pay Salma an additional Tk 2,000. This incident is also common in *Monga*-affected area of our country. They can sometime sell their children for a meal.

**Women in insecure Position and Dowry Pressure-** Of all the violence it is the most widespread problem in *Monga* affected area. Women of *Monga* prone area is always in a pressure of dowry and above 12.5% of women are in this pressure (PPRC, 2005). As they are poor they cannot fulfill the requirements of their husbands and face many torture, ill treatment and violence from the husband's family. Most of the male members of the family migrate from the *Monga* area and the women remain insecure in the house. However, about 12.9% that is 13% women are insecure when the male member of their family is migrated (PPRC, 2005).

**Case Study - 5**

Fajila Khatun (18)

District – Nilphamary

Fajila, a girl of eighteen years old migrated with her family in Santa, Akkelpur. She is third daughter of her parents. She has also another three sister of whom two are already married and one sister (15) who is still remain unmarried. Her father is too old that he cannot manage his family with his income. So Fajila and her mother work in a well off family of that village. Within one year her mother died of kidney disease. Now Fajila and her sister help her father in maintaining the family. Soon Fajila's elder sister brought a boy from Domer (their original Thana from which they are migrated) to give her marriage. Her marriage is completed in that village and without any dower. But six month later her marriage she again back to this village for the pressure of dowry from her husband family. Her husband claims that he needs fifty thousand taka for the marriage ceremony of his sister and Fajila has to meet this taka from her father's house. Now this girl feels helpless because she knows very well about the condition of her father. Her husband waits for six month and then put her in her father's house in Santa.

*Source: Personal interview with Fajila in Santa, Akkelpur, 8th July 2009.*

**Malnutrition-** Malnutrition is a silent killer. The immune system of the malnourished persons does not develop fully or function efficiently, and they easily die of diseases like diarrhea, which is not generally viewed as a killer disease. According to the World Bank and other development partners of Bangladesh, nearly 700 Bangladeshis die of hunger-related causes every day. Many of the deprived suffer from malnutrition. Nearly 50 percent of our children below the age of 5 suffer from malnutrition, which is among the highest in the world. Most, if not all, of these children are from poor families. In the slums areas of our country where the most migrated people reside, they are malnourished. It is a common phenomenon of migrated people in our country that they are malnourished and for this reason they are attacked with many diseases easily.

**Concluding Remarks**

An eminent Economist and Brazilian diplomat Josue de Castro said "Hunger is exclusion, exclusion from the land, from income, jobs, wages, life and citizenship. When a person gets to the point of not having anything to eat, it is because all the rest has been denied. This is a modern form of exile. It is death in life." Poverty and hunger are inseparable Siamese twins. Hunger is manifested in a number of forms; foremost are the malnutrition, violence; however, joblessness and prolonged working hours are the reasons of hunger. The number of hungry population in Bangladesh is alone 30 million. Twenty-four humans die every minute from hunger; and a staggering 16,000 children die every day.

Hunger is a result of not having access to food though there is enough food to feed the entire 6.5 billion souls of the planet. But the fact is, people cannot have access to food just because they cannot buy food; and they cannot buy food because they do not have work to earn the money. So the real problem is rooted in the problem of distribution of wealth and subsequently, in the access

to food. And from the above discussion we find hunger and famine-like situation prevail in north-western regions particularly during the lean season (when *Monga* prevailed) as the poorest do not have access to livelihoods and work. People migrate for fear of hunger that is *Monga* and this migration creates some socio-economic consequences which can be easily solved by agro-based industrialization and introduction of appropriate technology on fish-rice-jute cultivation for the marginal farmers, distribution of wealth, launching the programme of food for work or giving some aid, extending credit on easy terms and without collaterals, banning the activities of the informal money lenders and encouraging NGOs to launch income generating projects in the *Monga* prone areas. It will also introduce school feeding for primary school children where procurement of and preparation of the meal will be done by the people affected by hunger.

Professor Amartya Sen won his Nobel Prize a few years ago for his contribution to a new theory on famine control. The age-old concept was: to check famine conditions the administration needed to store and preserve sufficient quantities of food. But Professor Sen disagreed with the theory and instead elaborated the theory that the state needed to get the people into a condition where they would be able to purchase or come by food on their own. Bangladesh does not have food shortage any more. Even then many people die from starvation every year. In tackling the yearly famine or *Monga* the government can follow the theory of Amartya Sen.

It is to be noted that the discrimination against, and deprivation of, the poor not only represent a flagrant cruelty to them, but also a disgraceful robbing of their constitutionally mandated rights, enshrined in Articles 31 and 32. Article 31 of the Bangladesh Constitution states: "No action detrimental to the life, liberty, body, reputation or property of any person shall be taken except in accordance with law." And Article 32 states: "No person shall be deprived of life or personal liberty saves in accordance with law." It is clear that the government is in breach of its constitutional obligations to provide adequate support to the *Monga*-affected people, as a result of which people are now suffering.

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