

Changing Land Use Patterns and Increasing Inequalities : A Study of Coastal Bangladesh

TANEESHA MOHAN

STOCKHOLM ENVIRONMENT INSTITUTE

UNIVERSITY OF YORK



Area of Study

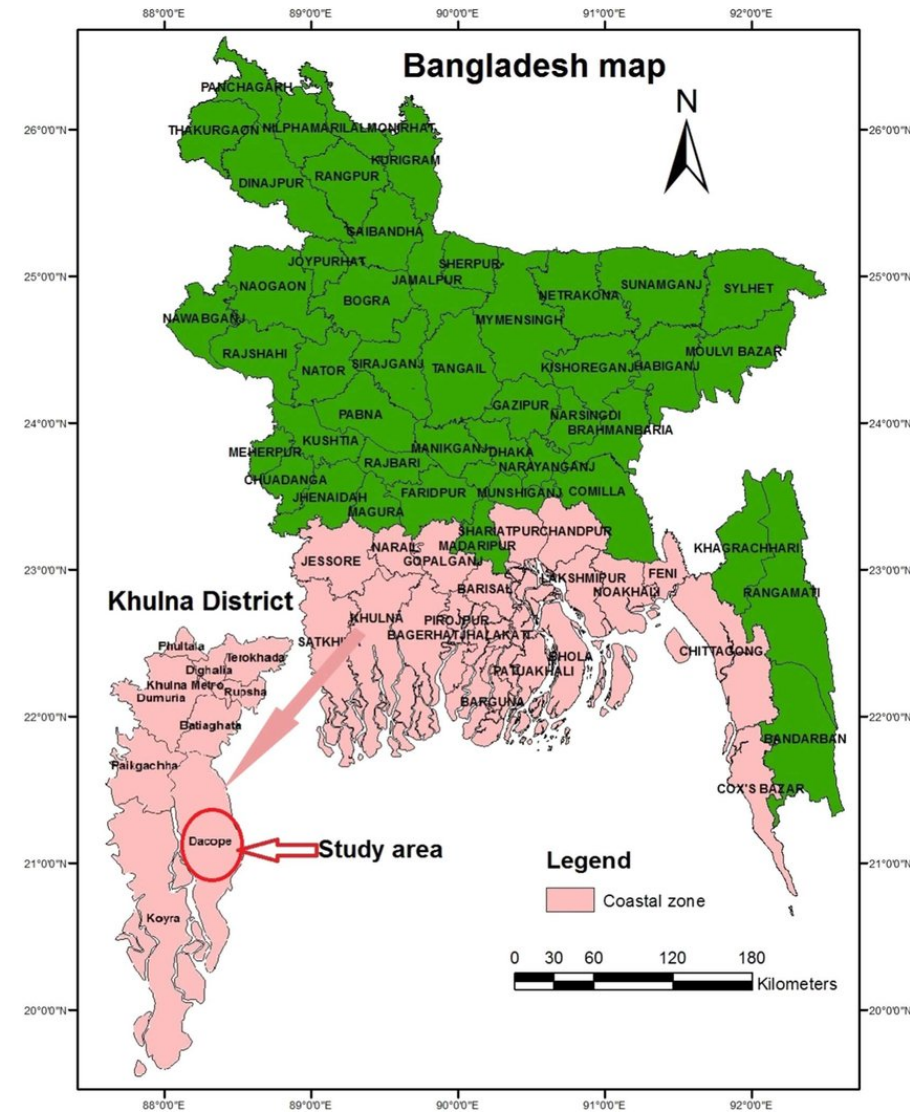
District Khulna

Division Dacope

Polder 32

Natural disasters:
Cyclones and tidal surges

Main activities:
Agriculture and
aquaculture



Roads and Transportation



Roads and Transportation



Key Questions

How has the changing land use patterns made some more vulnerable than others?

How does the commodification of resources alter the adaptive capacities and resilience to natural disasters, among the rural poor? {What did shrimp farming do for the rural poor?}

How do processes of bureaucratisation, macro-economic policies and micro-economic processes generate exclusionary practices and marginalization?

Methods – Mixed Methods Approach

Phase 1 : Household level survey: Resilience Ranking – 204

Phase 2: FGDs- High resilience and Low Resilience groups of male and female – 8

Phase 3: Unstructured Interviews- High resilience group– 9
Low resilience groups 12

Phase 4: Key Informant Interviews, with NGOs, Government Officials/ representatives and activists

Percentage distribution of households by caste and religion

Caste/Religion	Khulna	
	No.	%
(Bengali) Muslims	85	41.67
Khastriya / Hindu	79	38.73
Christian/ Muchi	40	19.61

Land distribution

Caste/ Religious Cateogry	0 Acres (landless)	0-1 Acres (marginal)	1-2.5 Acres (small)	2.5-5 Acres (medium)	<5 Acres (large)
Muchi (Christian)	30 (14.7%)	10 (4.9%)			
Khatriya (Hindu)		38 (18.62%)	22 (10.78%)	15 (7.3%)	4 (1.96%)
Bengali (Muslim)		44 (21.56%)	18 (8.82)	13 (6.3%)	7 (3.43%)



Typical house belonging to a Muchi

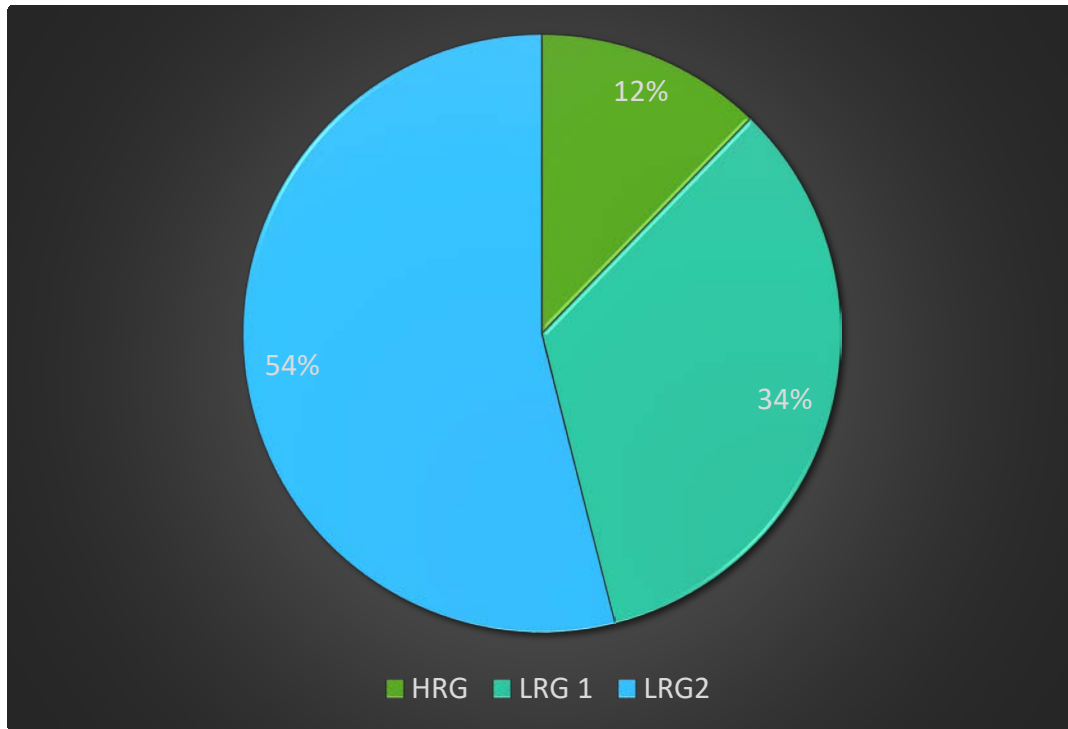


Low lying agricultural land

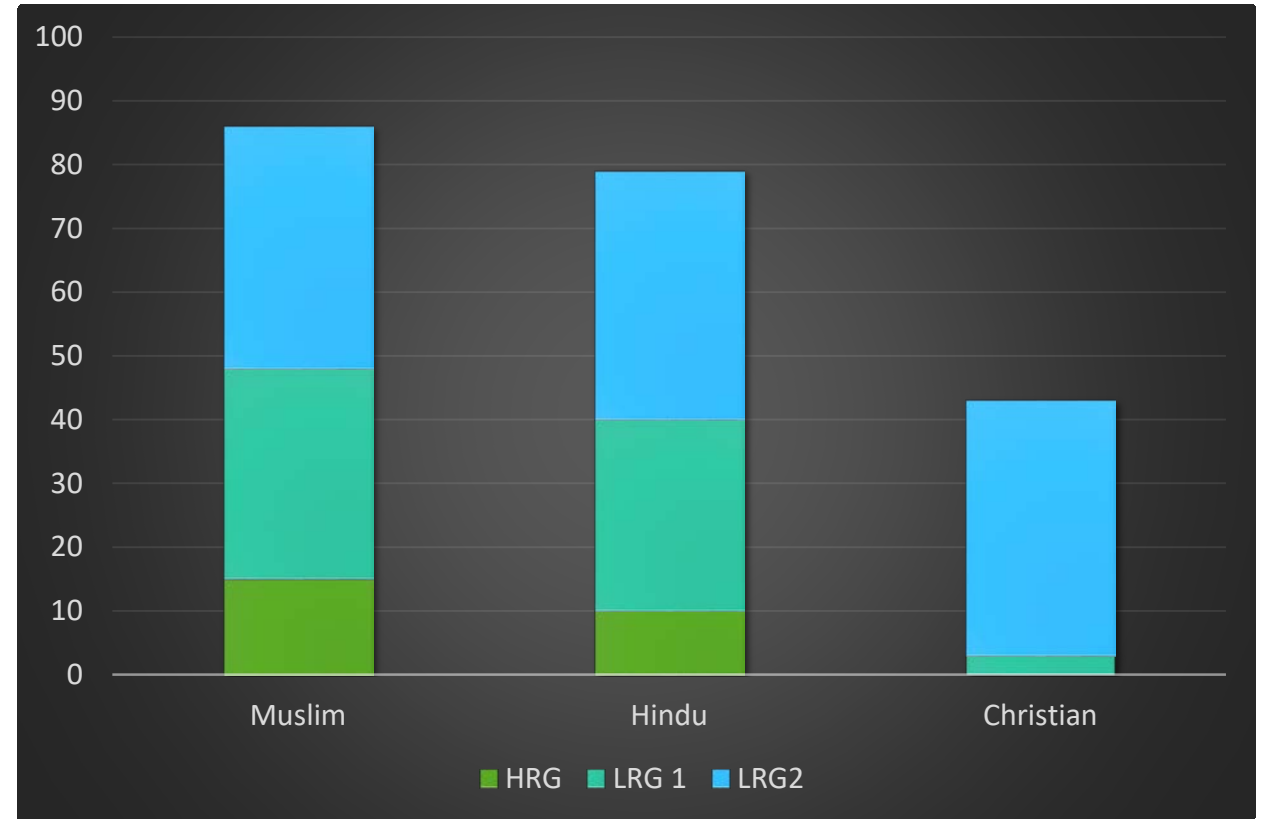


Paddy fields on higher ground in the interior of the village

High and Low Resilience Categories



Mean Likert Score 16

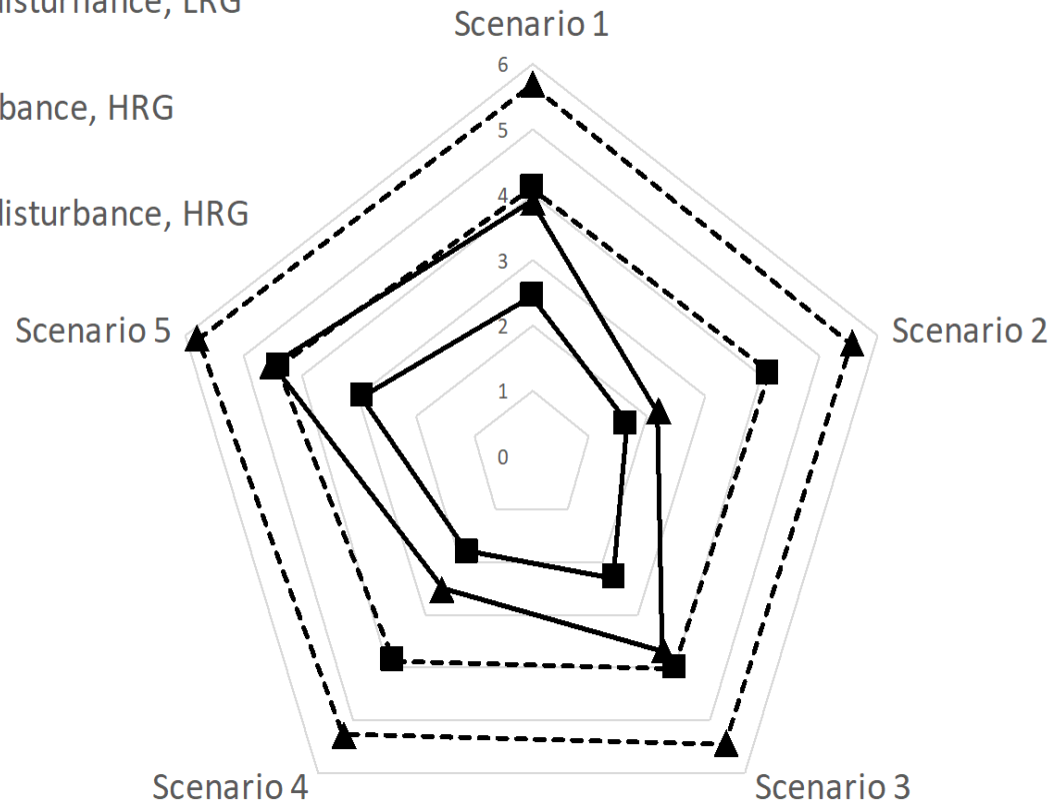


-■- Small disturbance, LRG

-▲- Significant disturbance, LRG

-■- Small disturbance, HRG

-▲- Significant disturbance, HRG



Scenario 1 : Flooding

Scenario 2: Erosion/ landslide

Scenario 3: Drought

Scenario 4: Reduction of
Development Aid

Scenario 5: Fluctuations in the
Market

At the National Level

Agriculture and its allied activities are said to produce one sixth of rural household income

Rice production increased from 15 million tons in 1971 to 51 million tons in 2013

Post liberalisation- contribution to GDP fell from 41.77 percent in 1998 to 12.99 percent in 2015

Privatisation of the services of the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation.

Dispossession of land and increase in landless labourers.

Increase in market dependence and indebtedness

Large tracts of land allocated to shrimp farming



At the District Level

Large scale shrimp production develop supply chains linking Bangladesh to the international market

Transformation of coastal landscape- the 'modernist project'

Reorganisation of polders to allow for brackish water shrimp cultivation.

Shift to aquaculture done through cartels of businessmen and large landowners.

Displacement from agriculture and market dependence on food.

At the local level

Aquaculture weakened the sluice gates

Devastating effects of cyclones (Aila in 2009)

Move back to agriculture for sustaining the livelihood- share cropping, fixed rent leasing and contract farming

Increasing NGO loans to cultivate land- rise in tenancy arrangements

For the larger landowner- carry out both shrimp farming and rice cultivation (own or tenant cultivation)

Landless labourers

Muchi- (ex-untouchable caste)- manual scavenging and agricultural daily wage work

Men migrate to urban centres for work

Women engage in poultry farming, make nets



Landless Labourers

Hindu (khasatriya) Women do not carry out daily wage work, help as family labour

Men – agricultural work in neighbouring regions. Many become krishanis (tied labour)

“My father passed away and we lost whatever little land we had. There isn’t enough work available here. We are drowning in NGO loans. We currently have seven loans that need to be repaid. How is that going to be possible with me barely getting 10 days of work in a month. My wife rears sheep and goats but this is not enough for us to sustain our family of six. I have now been working as a krishani for 5 years, in another village. The pay might not be good but at least I am ensured work. I can borrow rice and other food items from my employer... I can feed my family.”

Amol- 34 year Kshatriya, Hindu

Landless and Land-poor

Muslim- men: construction, rickshaw pullers, brick kilns, tenancy cultivation

Women – distance from agriculture with shrimp farming and use of machinery such as threshers.

Depend of remittances

Accompany their husbands – construction and brick kilns

Illegal crossing of borders to India to work as domestic maids, construction.

Landless Labourer

“I want to go to India and work there. There is so much work available, the people are nice and most importantly there is so much food and such variety of food, that someone like me has access to. I have worked in construction, in a garment factory and as maid for short periods. But there is a lot of risk involved in what I do. Even if I am able to cross the sea safely, there is always the fear that the police can detain me. This happened to me last year, where I was detained for three months. I am a little scared of going again as I don't want to get caught, especially since I have young children.”

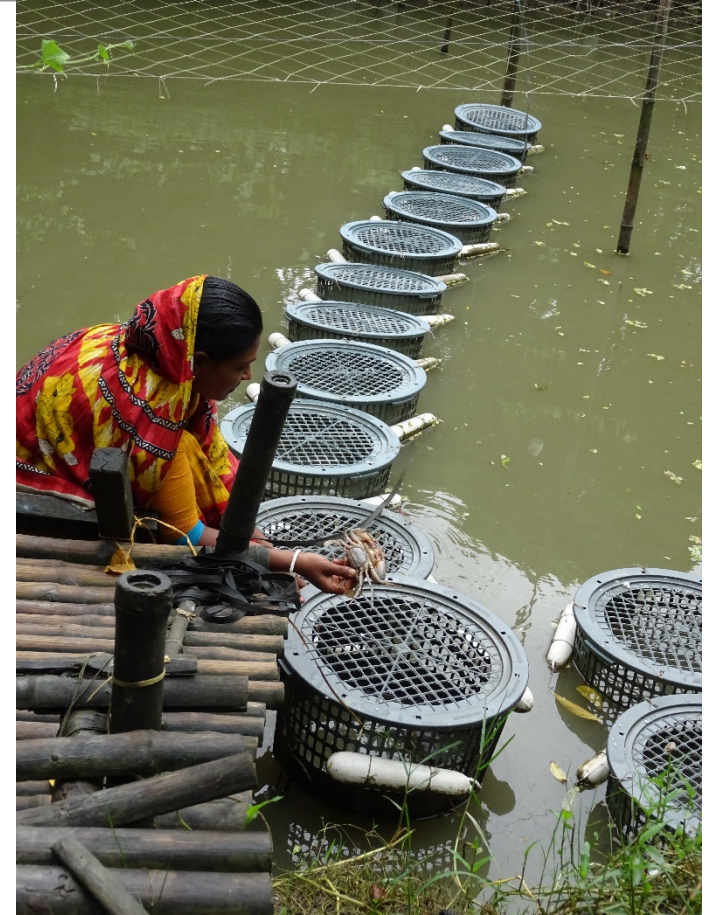
Jahanara, 32 year old Muslim

Aquaculture- NGO Intervention

NGOs focus on microfinance

Microfinance has increased tenancy cultivation

Crab and shrimp cultivation continues to be promoted as micro-enterprises for the rural poor to take up.



For Development- Rampal Power Plant

Rampal Power Plant project- Two 660 MW power units

9-13 kms away from the Sunderbans

1834 acres of land allocated – 95 % is farmland

Environment Impact Assessment report (Government) says it will not affect people living in a 10 km radius

Dredging, discharge of chemicals, site construction will affect rivers, canals, agriculture, fishing activities and increase in landslides.



Localised efforts from NGOs such as Nijera Kori who focus on the rights of the landless and land-poor peasants.

Stopped encroachment of shrimp farming in polder 22.

Protesting development of Rampal Power plant. Holding the government accountable for its actions



Concluding Remarks

The post liberalisation development pathway has created market dependency

Increasing debts

Rise in tenancy but tenant farmers have no rights on the land

Capitalist market relations have eroded traditional way of life

Increasing Market food security- diminishing household food security

Process of accumulation is continuing but agrarian landscape is more inequitable, resulting in further marginalisation and exclusion among the poor.

Displacement and dispossession in the name of development.