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Climate-Induced Migrations and Changing 'Households' in Bangladesh: An Analysis of New 'Householding' Structures from Gender Perspectives

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Abstract- Migration is influencing people's livelihood choices as well as their household arrangements in various ways. This research aims to explore the livelihood changes and shifts in household structures and management systems among the families of migrating people through a gender lens. In this qualitative research systemic literature review and content analysis, methods have been used to fetch the secondary data for analysis. The discussion section shows that losing traditional livelihoods, men are shifting to day labour, rickshaw pulling, or other alternative sources of livelihood and women are increasingly engaging in agriculture, garments, or domestic work. Therefore, people's migration to other areas restructuring household structures. This study found some emerging structures of households, such as families of women with children, grandparents with grandchildren or group living of working girls in their working areas. These changing structures are also impacting gender roles and interactions within families as well as society. Findings show that, where male members migrate outside and/or women engage in income-generating activities, women enjoy more mobility, bargaining and decision-making powers, economic freedom, and exercise their agency. However, the benefits of migration and new householding structures have some associated costs along with some dilemmas and subverting aspects.

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I. Introduction

Nowadays, in contemporary theories, researchers discuss migration as an integral part of life and an alternative way to adjust to the changing realities of life and the development process (Mallick & Siddiqui 2015). Therefore, the analytical discussions in migration discourse have changed from a pessimistic to an optimistic view. Bangladesh is a climate-vulnerable country. People are experiencing several climate change impacts such as frequent flooding, water scarcity and severe water surge in the coastal areas. Hence, people are migrating to different places across the country, especially to the cities (Gray & Mueller 2012). Thus, migration is changing the economic, social, and cultural contexts of households as well as society (Bernzen et al. 2019). In Bangladesh, climate-induced migration of people (both male and female) is changing the shape of household structures by adopting diverse livelihood choices and causing changes in the gender context of the household. Here, I have placed some arguments from secondary data sources to support my arguments as well as linked some examples from Bangladesh perspectives to analyse how changes are taking place within the household structure through migration.

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a) Research Objectives

The objective of this research is to identify the changing structures of households in Bangladesh due to climate change-induced migration. This study further intends to identify the livelihood changes and gender aspects of the changes in livelihoods and householding in migrating families.

b) Research Questions

- What are the existing household structures in traditional Bangladeshi society?
- How are the household structures transforming due to climate-induced migration?
- What are new forms of householding we are seeing now because of migrations and livelihood changes?
- How do gender roles and relations change in the new householding forms?

II. Conceptualization and Theoretical Aspects of Householding

Before going into the in-depth discussion of the research issues, here I have discussed the concept of 'Householding' that is taking shape in societies. Householding refers to the 'ways in which the processes of forming and maintaining household through time' (Douglass 2013). Householding provides a new analytical lens to analyse the household as a unit of analysis (Porio 2007). I have used this concept to analyse the transformations of the physical and structural changes of a household as well as power dynamics and how these are being affected by climate-induced migration in Bangladesh.

The term 'householding' is used to deliver the understanding that 'creating and sustaining a household is an ongoing, dynamic social process that covers all life-cycle stages and extends beyond the family' (Douglass 2006). Folbre (1986) mentioned that the household is the basic unit of social reproduction as well as nurtures social relations. It is not only for physical reproduction for human beings but also accommodates the material and emotional well-being and socio-cultural values of its members. Douglass (2006) suggested a few typical elements of householding in terms of household lifecycles. That includes-

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- Marriage/partnering
- Bearing children
- Raising and educating children (and adults)
- Maintaining the household
- Dividing labour and pooling income from livelihood activities
- Caring for the elderly and other non-working household members

Householding, therefore, is a concept that means the mechanism and principles of a household to direct its physical and social reproduction, economic, social, and cultural activities and management and power exercise of household activities. It is also considered an income-generating or labour-sharing social unit. Householding also includes political, social, and economic functions done by its members and sharing the equal risk associated with these activities (Smith et al. 1984).

In this essay, this concept of householding has been used to analyse different types of households in Bangladesh that are currently forming as a result of climate-induced migration.

III. Methodology

In this research, I have applied qualitative research methodology for data analysis. I have collected and used data from secondary sources. The sources of secondary data are academic research articles, books, and grey literature. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, access to physical library resources was limited, and sometimes was not possible. Therefore, given the COVID-19 pandemic circumstances, data collection completely relied upon online resources. Critical literature review and content analysis methods have been applied to analyse the research topic.

IV. Discussion and Analysis

Climate-induced migration is affecting different aspects of our life such as livelihood, economic & social status and gender contexts and relations in households as well as in society. In the discussion and analysis part, these changes and impacts of migration on householding will be discussed from three main aspects –

- Changes in livelihoods
- Changes in households & 'householding' and
- Changes in gender context & relations

Climate-induced migration and livelihood changes: migration as an alternative livelihood tactic reforming household structure in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has been experiencing significant climate change impacts and is listed as the fifth country which is facing high risks of disasters (Mucke 2014). The main livelihood sources of Bangladeshi people are agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, which are intensely dependent and responsive to climatic change. Due to climate change, these livelihood options are being squished and many people are losing their livelihood. For example, agricultural production, pattern and cultivation choices get affected due to salinity, soil fertility, water scarcity, and precipitation rate which are related to climatic changes and affect the agricultural sector of Bangladesh. Therefore, in coastal areas, people are changing their livelihoods, men's migration is increasing and shifting from one to another livelihood to find a suitable one, in that place women are involved more in agriculture to adapt (Chen & Mueller 2018). As coastal areas are more vulnerable to climate change, therefore, men are shifting from forest collection or farming to fishing, river fishing to shrimp cultivation or migrating to other areas for working as day labour in post-harvesting activities, as rickshaw pullers or hawkers. For women, their livelihood choices are also changing and being limited day by day. Women who used to work as a homemaker are now searching for a job and those who used to work in off-farm activities now shifting to fish processing, shrimp cultivation, and crab catching. Now, due to the loss of traditional livelihood options and migration has been accepted as an available option, more women are also going to city areas as domestic help or garment worker (Kartiki 2011). Therefore, livelihood changes are occurring all over the country, especially in more climate-vulnerable areas.

Thus, climate change is affecting people's livelihood arrangements and people are searching for alternative livelihood strategies to adapt to climate change situations. As a result, people are migrating to other areas, especially cities in search of new work and earnings. Hence, migration is established as an important way of livelihood activities (Afsar 2003). In the past environmental migration used to be considered as the failure to adapt to environmental stress but gradually, this is increasingly being perceived and getting support as a way of adapting with a new hope (Tacoli 2009). In Bangladesh, having negative consequences of environmental and climatic changes, people are also migrating to different places as an adaptation measure to find new jobs, places to live, maintain household expenses and meet up fundamental rights of family members. But this migration scenario is not linear and has a gender dimension. Males migrate more frequently and cover long distant areas and, are also high in number compared to female migrants. Usually, women's migration decision depends on many socio, economic, domestic and cultural factors and also happens in severe environmental or other extreme conditions (Evertsen & Geest 2019). These various types of migrations of male and female members of the family have long-term consequences concerning personal, household, social and community levels as

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well as gender relations and power structure of the family that results in new householding structures.

V. Migration and Changing Householding in Bangladesh

As discussed above, migration and searching for alternative livelihoods change the household structure of Bangladeshi families. Based on the literature, in Bangladesh, several types of households (but not limited to) are being prominent in response to the environmental, climate change, economic and socio-cultural contexts, livelihood options and migration trends. These new types of householding are presented in the following table and show the changing features within household structure compared to the traditional household structure.

Table 1: Types of householdings in Bangladesh

Category No.	New Family structures	HH head/ decision making power	Transformation/ migration dimension	Changing features of householding compared to traditional structure
1	Husband, wife with children	Husband, partly women	From root to migrated area	Women's agency practice (decision of migration), join paid workforce, double/ triple burden
2	Husband wife only	Husband, partly women	Root to migrated area (no children/leaving children at root area)	Women's agency practice (migration decision), wage earner, double/ triple burden
3	Young men/women with their aged parents	Male member, partly women	Young men/women (mostly unmarried) migrate to city areas for work, parents live at root areas	Split family, migrate independently, enjoy autonomy, decision making power, dilemma of coming back or settling down
4	Children with grandparents	Aged male member	Parents migrate keeping children to grandparents in root areas	Split of family, new family composition, increasing in number, Bad women- social and emotional challenges for women
5	Group living (young girls/ young boys)	Shared living	Root to migrated areas in group	New format of householding, independent decision making, agency and autonomy exercise, wage earner, sending money to family in root place and share family expanse, group leaving, dilemma of settlement and marriage (especially for girls)
6	Women with children	Primarily women, consulting with male member	Male member migrates	Shift of householding pattern, power exercise, decision making, gendered allocation of resources, access to agriculture, market and other livelihood opportunities
7	Men with children	Men, partly women	Female member migrates temporarily for work	Few in number, consists during extreme/ exceptional conditions (gendered opportunity of work, men's inability / unwillingness to migrate)
8	Widowed or separated women (with or without children)	Women	Migrate to other areas or remain in the root areas and find alternative livelihoods opportunities	Shift of householding pattern, power exercise, decision making, gendered allocation of resources, access to agriculture, market and other livelihood opportunities

**This table is based on the author's analysis of secondary data*

From this table, it is seen that there are transformations in the household structure that are happening in response to the migration and changing life situations of people.

The typical elements of householding that Douglass (2006) mentioned (see in the 'Householding' concept section), all these elements may not be present in each family structure but contains a combination of some of these elements that also change the family structure over time as well. Marriage/ partnering, childbearing & caring, and financial activities are the most common elements in almost all the household structures (1,2,3,4,6,7 no categories of the table), on the other hand, marriage is not present in some structures like group living of young girls/boys (5 no category) where a group of girls or boys live as a family (may migrate from same or different areas) and work in different spheres.

Not only men but a huge number of women migrate to different cities for their livelihood and to support their families. Evertsen & Geest 2019 identified three categories of migrating women in their research in Bangladesh, these are (1) women who migrate with their husbands, (2) women of female-headed households, typically divorced or widowed, and (3) young unmarried women who had migrated alone to provide for

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themselves and their families back in the village. Mostly young unmarried girls join in the garment sector and they form a new householding system living in a group that is very common in Dhaka city slum areas. Tacoli & Mabala (2010) depicted in their article, that before migrating these girls usually do not move independently in rural areas but migrating to new city areas they get involved with income-generating activities. They move independently, enjoy economic freedom and send remittances to parents in the village. Like them, Bangladeshi garment daughters also face similar changing cycles in their life and more confidently adapt to the new householding and life experiences.

Another study considers that the cycle of rural to urban, again rural migration allows these families to 'make the best of both worlds' (Nguyen & Locke 2014). These mostly happen when leave their parents in rural areas and migrate to cities (3, 4 & 5 no categories) for work and then return to the root area (sometimes) to settle or migrate again. In many cases, they do not permanently return to the rural areas but keep a strong connection with their parents and rural life. These households get divided (extended to nuclear or split family) into both rural and urban places, become able to choose among more livelihood options and create a safeguard to deal with any upcoming challenges like economic shock, changing social or environmental contexts or disasters. Similarly, Bangladeshi coastal people are building 'trans-local households' (as mentioned in Nguyen & Locke 2014) as a climate change adaptation strategy to find new livelihood options and build a house in nearby city areas (Khulna, Satkhira cities) while also keeping their parents at root villages (Kartiki 2011). If any disaster strikes, they move their family whichever is a comparatively safer place and depend on other livelihood options. That is also a new householding form that arises in response to climate hazards.

VI. Dimensions of Redefined Householding: Gender Perspectives

Migration and changes in livelihood patterns influence the lives of both men and women and gendered interaction within households, in both positive, subverting and sometimes unpredictable ways. Many pieces of literature show that migration and livelihood change increase women's power to make their own decisions, it also reduces men's traditional leading roles (Nguyen & Locke 2014; Antman 2015), on the other hand, these also create some dilemmas in migrant men and women's life (Mallick 2019; Jacka 2012).

Migration of male members allows higher bargaining power for women of the family that also reflects lower gender discrimination in the family among children where girls receive more allocation of budget for their education and clothes (Antman 2015). Another study also demonstrates that women's income and increasing bargaining power have a positive relation with better health, food, clothes, and education facilities for the girl child in a family (Duflo 2003). The scenario of Bangladesh is also closely similar to these studies. When women migrate, a great number of them enter into paid work sectors and earn money, thus they also enjoy comparatively more economic freedom than in their past life and also increased bargaining and expanse power (Evertsen & Geest 2019). That impact their decision-making process and the householding nature of a family. Women take participation in the allocation of family income, do some savings, and distribute facilities among family members. Thus, householding takes a modified shape under new circumstances and influences the gender status of the household.

Among migrating women, unmarried young women migrate to the city more than married women. Unmarried girls and women can take decisions independently or consult with family members to migrate and work. They also exercise more freedom on their income, expenditure, and savings. On the other hand, Married women have their obligatory gender and household responsibilities and take care of children and senior adult members. They are also tagged as 'bad mothers' if they don't perform traditional gender roles perfectly, leaving children to grandparents to migrate and work outside (Evertsen & Geest 2019). But also, staying under social pressure and stigmatization, women take bold decisions while needed. Under such circumstances as climate change or any unexpected problem of family, some studies show that women make the decision to migrate with, partly or without family members to change livelihood, tackle the challenge and find a better life (Singh 2019). Evertsen & Geest 2019 showed in their study on Bangladeshi slums, that it is married women who decided to move to the city, joining in wage work and comforting family to adjust to the new environment. So, this is also strong evidence of married women's agency practice to decide to migrate.

As a result of migration and the new householding process, women who choose or are compelled to live in root areas are also gaining some incremental perspectives within the existing social order. Existing power dynamics remain the same in society, but due to male migration women's roles and new activities change their status in the family as well as in society. In the article of Lahiri-Dutt and Adhikari (2016), they showed that women are getting involved with agriculture as de facto women-head of households and gradually changing shared farming systems from sharecropping to contract to farm. Usually, sharecropping benefits are shared equally, therefore, it is also risk-sharing. But in contract farming, the female head of household is doing in the absence of the male

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member, profit is fixed through negotiation so profit and risk both are low.

This situational change can be understood from two points of view. On one hand, due to low bargaining positions, less access to assets and land and low experience in contract dealing, women get fewer benefits. On the other hand, this is a new crop production contract system they have introduced, and they choose to run agricultural activities and use lands for production in absence of male members and gradually enter into the formal agricultural market. In Bangladesh, this similar trend can be seen where women are getting involved with the formal agricultural system, market economy and buying and selling agricultural products while male members are away from home. This scene can be seen especially in char (river islands) areas of Bangladesh. One research article done in this context shows that women in chars are mostly involved in post-harvesting activities, but after the migration of male members, women either take responsibility for cultivation by themselves buying agricultural inputs, managing labour and cultivation activities or giving land to others to cultivate on contract for income and maintain a livelihood in chars (Chaity & Rahman 2017). Thus, women enter into formal agricultural activities and markets to adapt to the situation. Now in char areas, women's agricultural activities and dealings with the external market stakeholders are very common as char men frequently migrate in search of work and women stay at the chars to look after the family and resources. In this householding format, women exercise their household decision making power, control income, and expenses, manage agricultural activities, and profit and loss management while these also increase their knowledge and skills which results from the outmigration of men.

Migration also offers gendered opportunities in some cases. The garment sector in Bangladesh is well established and blooming day by day. This sector offers more working opportunities to women than men. Though this nature of work is questionable in that it is reinforcing women's subjugation and dominates the women's labour force (Afsar 2002) but on the other hand, this is also offering a huge working opportunity for women to enter into the professional working sector that also liberates women, giving economic and social empowerment. Working opportunity in the garment sector in Bangladesh acts as an economic full factor for women's migration to the city and perceive migration as an efficient way to cope with the risk that environmental stress poses to their previous livelihood (Evertsen & Geest 2019).

As earlier mentioned, in some cases migration and new householding may impact gender contexts negatively or in unpredictable ways. Mallick (2019) discussed from the Bangladeshi context that, disasters can also reduce mobility by detaching the required resources to migrate as well as creating a labour crisis in the affected place. Many families face greater problems to migrate as they neither have adult male family members who could work as labour migrants, the required resources to facilitate migration, nor access to the necessary migration networks. Mallick called them "trapped populations", who are mainly elderly and female-headed households because they are forced to live with the resources that are locally available to them. Their immobility is an additional source of their vulnerability and increases their suffering. Furthermore, left behind women face negative impacts due to the outmigration of husbands for the long term, such as heavy workloads, poor mental and physical health, insecurity and conflicted and unstable conjugal relationship with husbands though household income increases (Jacka 2012).

In addition, gender norms create social costs for women who migrate, therefore, they go through ambivalent feelings about migration. The challenges Jacka finds for some women, returning to the patriarchal cultural norms of their rural physical household can also be seen in Bangladeshi societies. They face greater problems adjusting to the rural lifestyle, finding life partners and entering into traditional housewife roles as well as the generational gap between the migrant and elderly people place additional challenges on their life (Cannon 2002; Mallick 2019).

VII. Conclusion

To conclude, it is evident in Bangladesh, that migration has been embraced as an adaptation strategy by the climate-vulnerable people and this process is influencing their livelihood options, gender relation, and householding process. Here, on one hand, climate change is compelling people to migrate, on the other hand, better income, more working opportunities and gendered work opportunities (garments and domestic help) act as incentives for migration thus transitions are happening in households in Bangladeshi societies. In the new householding structure, migration brings lots of impacts on the life of women and men. Firstly, it affects the traditional distribution of gender roles where men usually had more power to decide but gradually, women also take part in the decision-making process and power exercise. Second, it gives women a chance to hold power and initiates their own decisions, and third, it changes the existing economic, social and cultural structures of the household as well as the society starts a new phase of transition. These new households in Bangladesh also influence gender relations, women's empowerment and agency exercise within the household as well as the community.

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