

Review Note Assignment for Module E 2005

On reading Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury: "Uprooted Twice: Refugees from the Chittagong Hill Tracts", in Refugees and the State, do you agree that conflict in CHT is in the last resort a conflict over land?
Trijita Gonsalves

This article focuses on the people from the CHT who have taken shelter in India on different occasions. The first time was in the 1960's when a dam was constructed on the Karnaphuli river in the CHT and the second time was in the 1980's, when people from the plains were directly and indirectly encouraged to settle in the Chittagong hills. In both these cases, many people were internally displaced and many more crossed over to the neighboring parts of India seeking refuge.

The socio-economic and demographic profiles of the CHT was linked to the strategies of development and politics of the region. Mostly having river and reserve forest areas, the CHT has three hill districts of Bangladesh namely Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachhari. These hill people differ from the majority Bengali population of the plains in race, religion and language. They have similarities with their neighbors in N.E India in appearance and culture. It seems that they chose to go/flee to Tripura rather than the plains of Bangladesh because they are more at home with these people.

The British rulers pursued the policy of non-interference while administering the CHT. They recognized the local rulers as autonomous entities. The settlement of outsiders was banned in the CHT and non-indigenous people were not permitted to enter the CHT without a permit. However after 1930, a permit was no longer required to enter the CHT. In 1964, its special status as a separate area was finally abolished. After the partition of India, successive regimes of Pakistan and Bangladesh kept on marginalizing these people within the polity of the nation. Bengali Muslim settlers from the overpopulated Bangladeshi mainland kept coming to the CHT and these hill people survived as refugees in Tripura, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.

In 1964, the Kaptai Dam on the Karnaphuli River displaced thousands of people (Chakmas) from their traditional homeland. When these hapless people came to India, the state governments of Assam and Tripura refused to accommodate these people and they were settled in the land of North East Frontier Agency. In this case, we see that the conflict was basically over the question of development. Bearing the brunt of development, the tribal people were excluded from its benefits.

In Arunachal Pradesh, regulations prohibit non-locals and non-residents from acquiring interests in land or land produce. Due to these regulations, the Arunachal Pradesh authorities felt that the decision to settle the Chakmas and Hajongs was wrong. Here, we find the conflict generating due to the possession of land. The Arunachal authorities felt that other states should also share the burden of settling these refugees. At present, these refugees are settled in Lohit, Changlang and Papun Pare in Arunachal Pradesh. The present population of Chakmas in Arunachal Pradesh is around 65,000. The growth in the last three decades has been phenomenal.

Since their resettlement, the Chakmas and Hajongs have been illegally denied Indian citizenship and systematically deprived of other fundamental rights. They were occupying land so they had to be removed. Here we see that to remove them, they were tortured, forcibly evicted after burning their houses. This conflict was mainly over land.

The AAPSU launched 'Refugee Go back' movement to evict Chakmas and Hajongs from Arunachal Pradesh. In 1980, the government of Arunachal Pradesh banned employment of Chakmas and Hajongs, seized their trade licences in 1994. Thus, their employment options were reduced, which would force them to leave, locked in a vicious cycle of poverty. Basic social infrastructure like schools and hospitals were dismantled in areas inhabited by Chakmas and Hajongs. The government of Arunachal Pradesh kept on insisting that the Chakmas were foreigners and so, they were not entitled to fundamental rights and could be asked to quit the state at any time.

In 1996, the Supreme Court observed that the Government of Arunachal Pradesh should protect the life and liberty of the refugees in the region. But till date, few steps have been taken to implement the directives of the Supreme Court. Moreover, the state government remained a silent spectator while the situation worsened for the refugees.

The AAPSU began a 'detect and deport' foreigner's programme. The main motive behind all this, we see, is the desire to acquire the land occupied by the Chakmas and Hajongs.

In 1994, all official facilities for the Chakmas were withdrawn. Economic blockades were organized around Chakma refugee camps. Facing a hostile administration and hostile political parties, the Chakmas have survived over the years. They have faced institutionalized discrimination under different Chief Ministers. They have become permanent victims of xenophobia.

The second case of being uprooted from their homeland took place in 1971, during Bangladesh's war for independence. At this time, the people in the CHT did not support the Bengalis. So, the Mukti Bahini, after independence, went on a rampage in the CHT in the name of hunting Pakistani soldiers. The 1972 constitution of Bangladesh did not recognize the distinct identity of the indigenous people living in the CHT. The new state of Bangladesh did not leave any scope for cultural or political autonomy for the hill people of the CHT. Moreover, after a series of massacres by Bangladesh security forces, in 1986, many refugees sought shelter in Tripura. However in Tripura, concerns about health, education, healthcare etc for the refugees was non-existent. The Indian administration was quite often indifferent to the needs of the refugees. However after 1997, the fate of the hill people changed slowly. After an agreement between India and Bangladesh, many refugees returned home in the CHT. However, again, due to crisis over land, the Bangladesh government was unable to rehabilitate more than half of the tribal

families that had returned. Moreover, many Muslim settlers from the plains had started living in the CHT, occupying land belonging to the indigenous people.

Thus, we see that conflicts were basically over land. Even when the tribals came back, others had occupied their lands.

Finally, it seems that though a peace accord was signed in 1997, the CHT refugees till today face a number of difficulties that require urgent attention. The Government of Bangladesh has not honored many of its promises. The land question continues to remain unsolved.

On reading Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury: "Uprooted Twice: Refugees from the Chittagong Hill Tracts", in Refugees and the State, do you agree that conflict in CHT is in the last resort a conflict over land?

Nandini Basistha

Ans. The essay under review is a valuable contribution about the situation of displaced people of CHT in India. Though the book 'Refugees and the State' is about the 'Practices of Asylum and care in India', Mr. Ray Chaudhury does not confine himself into discussing the condition of Chakma and Hajongs in Northeast India. Taking a holistic approach, he discusses the situation of CHT before the displacement and after the repatriation. In the last two segments of the essay, he refers the conflict over land in CHT as a problem of repatriation. Before discussing the gravity of this problem, I want to review the essay.

The Causes of Displacement

According to Mr. Ray Chaudhury, the people of the CHT were uprooted twice – in the 1960s and again in the 1980s. Though the immediate reasons were different, the ground for their forced eviction had created long before.

The CHT is home to many indigenous groups, who differ from the majority Bengali population of the plains in race, religion, language, economy and lifestyle. For using the natural resources of this strategically important area freely, the British had followed a policy of exclusion in CHT. This crystallized their identity as well as segregated them from mainstream national politics. So this Buddhist majority area was annexed with Islamic Pakistan. Naturally, the Hindu and Buddhist people of CHT had become minority in Pakistan.

In modern nation states, majority group always controls politics as well as resources. They use natural resources – like land, water, forest etc – for their own benefit, trampling the basic rights of minorities. Even, most of the development projects are targeted for developing someone, but exploit minorities. The case of CHT is not exceptional. For the construction of the Kaptai Hydroelectric Power Project over the Karnaphuli river, hundreds and thousands of people were displaced. About 40,000 of them took refuge in India. 'They came in a hopeless, pathetic condition, just with the cloths that they wore'. Their condition clearly depicts that they got no compensation from the govt. of the then Pakistan. So they became the victims of resource politics and development.

The third major blow for the indigenous people of CHT is the creation of Bangladesh. According to Amena Mohsin ('Military Hegemony and the Chittagong Hill Tracts', in the book 'Living on the edge'), the state offers them only two options: either to assimilate themselves with the Bengali mainstream and thereby lose their cultural identity, or to face extermination. The govt. of Bangladesh deployed troops to Bengal to force the CHT one of the strategies of the army is to evict the hill people forcefully from their homeland and settlement of Bengalis. Thus state homogenization process gives way to resource politics and the instrument of govt. (i.e. army) serves for fulfilling the greed of the majority group.

There are little bit of confusion about the exact date and time of the displacement. According to Mr. Ray Chaudhury, since 1978 the Indian govt. started providing shelter for people from the CHT. According to another source (the essay 'Bangladesh: Displaced and Dispossessed' by Meghna Guhathakurta and Euraiya Begum from the book 'Internal Displacement in South Asia, edited by Paula Banerjee, Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury and Samir Kumar Das), displacement in the CHT occurred during the armed conflict from the mid-1970s to 1997. Whatever the time and date of the displacement, the evaluation of reason is important to erase the root-cause.

In fact land issue remains at the core of the problem of internal as well as external displacement while property rights of the tribal population have been regulated by local traditions and not registered in public records, the Bengali settlers obtained official documents certifying their ownership of land. So, after leaving the homeland either forced fully or for well-founded fear of being persecuted, the tribal people of CHT lost ownership of land. The Bengali-Muslim settlers, supported by the Bangladesh army, have been getting ownership of the fertile land of Bangladesh. So, naturally, when the tribal people of CHT were repatriated following the Indo-Bangladesh Accord (1997), the Muslim settlers refused to give up land. Thus, the land question, which had been the principal reason for the repeated exodus of the people of the CHT, continues to remain unresolved. As the govt. of Bangladesh was hesitant to tackle the land question, the resettlement scheme could not succeed. Based on available figures, it may be suggested that about 30,000 persons have not been able to regain possession of their land – thus making them internally displaced upon return to the CHT (Amnesty International, Human Rights in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh, February 2000, quoted in the essay, 'Displaced and Dispossessed', *ibid*).

The conflict in CHT is not in the last resort a conflict over land. It is conflict for militarisation and Islamisation also. The CHT underwent full-scale militarisation following the assassination of Mujibur Rahman in 1975 (Military Hegemony and the Chittagong Hill Tract', *ibid*). The military has committed gross violation of human rights in the region. As the 1972 constitution

declared 'Bengali' as the basis of nationhood, the hill people have to face the discrimination deprivation and exploitation in social, cultural, economic and political fields. After declaring 'Islam' as the state religion of Bangladesh in 1988, the Buddhist people of CHT were persecuted by the military in many ways. Even after Peace Agreement, the govt. did not reduce its military presence in the CHT, did not drop pending criminal charges against the former SB members or move toward devolving some powers to local groups, as it had promised. The tribal population is reportedly still victim of human rights abuses of Bangladesh security forces. Until and unless the govt. of Bangladesh does not consider these issues more humanitarily, the conflict in CHT will be continued.

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M. Mayilvaganan

The South Asian region is no stranger to the phenomenon of refugees and displaced persons. From the northeast to the northwest, peoples struggling for independence, autonomy, identity or other goals or simply caught up in civil wars not of their own making or displaced forcibly due to infrastructure projects like dams, suffer the trauma of displacement and its attendant hardships. Though the forced migration is due to many reasons but question of control over natural resource (land) has been at the centre of these reasons. Even in displacements induced by conflicts, it is the question of resources that lies at the heart of most of these conflicts. In fact, the phenomenon of displacement due to resource politics and environmental degradation may said to be more pronounced in this South Asian region because of the population growth and industrialisation drive of these countries.

Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury's article on the subject is part of comprehensive work on refugees' asylum in India. Considering the refugees generation and their movements across borders of the countries of South Asia for shelter in order to protect their life. This article primarily focuses on refugees from the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) who on different occasions sought shelter in India. In fact, it brings to our attention the fact that these refugees- indigenous people- evicted from their homes either in the name of modernization or in the name of conflict.

The author has presented a detail account on Chittagong Hill Tracts' socio-economic and demographic profiles and then attempted to link them to the strategies of development and politics of the region of Bangladesh. The CHT is home to indigenous people like Chakmas, Bawm, Chak, Khumi, Marma, Tripura and others who enjoyed autonomy since British rule. The British have brought certain regulations and legislation in this regard. The article outlines the discriminatory policy of the Pakistan government and then Bangladesh government in support of the majority Bengal Muslims against the tribals. The Bangladesh government's aggressive settlement policy has threatened the traditional rights of the tribals over the land. In regard to the government's discrimination and marginalisation the armed conflict broke out between Chakma tribals and government security forces in eighties. Earlier in 1960s the same people have been victim of the environment disaster as a result of government's hydel project in their homeland.

In the next section the author analyses India's policies and assistance to the Chakma refugees, which form author's main focus of the article. The problems faced by the Chakma refugees in northeast India especially at Arunachal Pradesh has been explained detailly. The refugees are being forced to stay in a pitiable condition in camps at Tripura whereas those settled at Arunachal Pradesh in 1960s and 1970s suffer from the hostile policy of state government and locals and they live fearfully. The central government adopted a humanitarian approach to the Chakmas in Arunachal Pradesh. But the refugees are yet to get the rights like citizenship, as promised by the Government of India. The Indian government made an effort in finding a desirable solution to the Chakma refugees who came in eighties. The article clearly states the negotiations between the Indian government with Bangladesh and subsequent agreement by which both governments worked out a procedure for refugee repatriation as a result of improved relation between two countries.

Though the land question or resource politics is directly or indirectly responsible for the conflicts in Chittagong Hill Tracts, as the author also has highlighted it as a principal reason for the repeated exodus of the people of the CHT but the article do not provides any specific section or substantial evident to prove that the conflict in CHT is the last resort over land. In order to get a clear understanding of the Chakma issue and the conflict over land, in addition to this article, the authors other works like *Living on the Edge: Essays on the Chittagong Hill Tracts* (along with Subir Bhaumik, Meghna Guhathakurta and Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury (Kathmandu, 1997)) and *State Marginalisation and the Displacement of Population in the Chittagong Hill Tracts* (Omprakash Mishra and Anindyo J. Majumdar (ed.), The Elsewhere People (Delhi 2003)) would give a clear understanding on the subject. Nevertheless, the article provides a holistic view on the Chakma refugees' problem, which worth mention here. It is clear, however, that the basic rights of these refugees are not being met by the Bangladesh government. The experiences of Chakmas who have been marginalized and force to flee of their homeland suggest that existing majoritarian attitude of ruling class in countries of South Asia have limited the scope of conflict resolution.

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Cateljne Mittendorff

The conflict in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh developed into a conflict over land nowadays. The land has become contested since settlers from the plains have occupied territory that used to belong to indigenous tribes. However, this conflict is not originally or primarily about land. The primary source of conflict is the an active government policy trying to consolidate the territorial integrity of the state in an area traditionally inhabited by people with a different cultural and religious background, who demand a return to the autonomy they used to have in the past.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts are strategically very important for Bangladesh whereas it shares international boundaries with the Indian states of Tripura to the north and Mizoram to the east and Chin Rakhain states of Myanmar to the southeast and south. But the people that originally inhabit the hills differ from the majority of the Bengali population of the plains in race, religion and language. They are of Mongoloid, Tibeto-Burman and Mon-Khmer origin and live in tribes of which the Chackmas form the majority. They are predominantly Buddhists, as opposed to the Muslim Bengalis.

The root of the conflict stems from the special status the Chittagong Hill Tracts used to have. During colonial times the Hill people had a friendly relationship with the British colonial power of the Indian subcontinent. In return for the loyalty of the tribes, the British recognised the Hill Tracts as a home for indigenous peoples and introduced a regulation in 1900 banning the settlement of outsiders in the CHT and prohibiting the transfer of land there to non-indigenous people. This special status was abolished, however, when in 1964 the region was brought under the purview of the legislature of Pakistan. Even though the Chackma leaders had believed that they, as being Buddhists would become part of India, after the division of the Indian subcontinent it was decided that the Hill Tracts became part of Muslim Eastern Pakistan. The Pakistani government removed the CHT from the list of tribal areas and the Hill Tracts ceased to be an Excluded and Tribal area. Besides this event, in 1964 the Kaptai Hydroelectric Power project made many people lose their livelihoods and hundred of thousands of people had to flee their homes.

In 1971, during the war for Bangladesh's independence, people in the CHT in general had not been very active in supporting the Bengalis. They saw the Bengali freedom struggle as a conflict between the Bengalis and the West Pakistanis; they felt they had little to do with it. Moreover one of the Chackma leaders showed his faithfulness to Pakistan and the Hill Tracts became a hideout base for Pakistani loyalists during the independence struggle. Subsequently, the 1972 Constitution of Bangladesh did not include any provision recognising the distinct identity of the indigenous people living in the CHT.

The new state of Bangladesh was based on the idea of Bengali nationalism and did not leave any scope for cultural or political autonomy for the hill people. As it became clear to the political leadership of the indigenous people of the CHT that the Bangladeshi government was not in the mood to listen to their concerns on the new nation's political agenda, they set up the Parbotyo Chattogram Jana Sanghata Samiti (PCJSS) as a political group, and later its armed wing, the Shanti Bahini (SB). These CHT fighters were supported by Indian security forces, which provided them with training. As a result the SB carried out a series of attacks on Bangladeshi forces and civilians and the Bangladeshi forces inevitably reacted with counter-insurgency operations; the conflict was born.

During this time the government of Bangladesh started to create an active policy of settling people from the overpopulated plains to the fertile Hill Tracts. The gradual militarisation and Islamisation, which followed due to this policy, caused another major exodus of indigenous Hill Tracts people. The CHT had now become home to tens of thousands Muslim settlers from the plains, and meanwhile many of them had occupied land belonging to indigenous peoples, often with the support of the civilian and military administration of the country.

In the meantime there is a peace accord between the PCJSS and the Bengali government and many refugees have returned to their homes. However only a few returnees have been able to get back their land, the government did not reduce its military presence and it did not move toward devolving some powers to local groups, as it had promised. Basically the government has failed to fulfil the demands of the hill people and maintains a strong presence in the region. Consequently the principal root of the conflict, disapproval on the degree of autonomy of the indigenous tribes, is still there. Only the problem has been further complicated through the question to whom the land belongs now the refugees have come back.

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Neena Krishna

The reasons for forced migration may be many. It may be due to poverty, development projects, violent conflicts, ethnic hatred, demand for self-determination, counter insurgency operations by security forces, ethnic/political discrimination, taking over of land by migrant communities, but at the root of it all lies the resource crisis. This is clearly demonstrated by the situations prevailing in South Asia.

The resource conflict and forced migration are closely inter-linked. The worst manifestation of this has been in North-East Region in the form of ethnic conflicts between various communities. On the one hand, ethnic community claimed exclusive rights over a space that it defined as its "homeland" on the premise that it is the "original inhabitant" of the land. By the same token, they have held that outsiders have no right to settle in the said "homeland". On the other hand, there are claims of the people who have been overtly or covertly coerced /forced to migrate in search of asylum. The issue involved is thus: the armed conflict/development project which has led to displacement and the corresponding right of the displaced to rehabilitation, possibly by facilitation of their return back to their homelands.

The article by Sabyasachi Choudhary provides interplay of factors which led to displacements in Chittagong Hill Tract (CHT) region; the hostilities of the people of the states in which they sought refuge and the importance of rehabilitation and repatriation. It is highlighted how the geographical location of CHT created indigenous tribal communities with a distinct identity and ethnic flavour, different from the majority Bengali population – a fact which was always acknowledged by all rulers; even British adopted the over-all policy of non-interference. However, the development project viz., construction of Kaptai Dam on the Karnophuli River in 1960s, and the armed conflict in the 1980s in the wake of militarization, the transfer of population from plain districts and control of administration by non-inhabitants of CHT saw the uprooting and mass exodus of the tribals of CHT from their traditional homeland. The back drop of CHT clearly demonstrates some of the reasons which become a cause for displacement.

The people so uprooted seek refuge by traveling to the neighbouring land, as happened in the case of CHT. It is highlighted how the destitute and homeless are regarded with suspicion by the people of the host country. They may be given a temporary residence on humanitarian grounds, but their long stay or a hope to seek a second home and to be assimilated in the society of host country is met with the persistent outcry for expelling the “foreigners” which finds manifestation in the slogan ‘refugees go back home’. The article thus, highlights the fear of the people of the host country of losing their own ethnic identity, deprivation or reduction in their share of resources, fear of marginalization of their interests and also of opening the flood gates for illegal migration which may turn their Homelands into dumping grounds. Such fears often get manifested in the form of ethnic hatred and violent protests and economic blockades, forcing them into a life of extreme poverty and also subject them to situations which make them even more vulnerable. The article thus, brings forth the helplessness of the people dislodged from their Homelands due to circumstances beyond their control, and the corresponding fear of the people of the host country of alienation and loss of identity within their own homeland, which is prompted by nothing but resource conflict.

The author’s reference to the plight of the displaced persons who sought refuge in the State of Arunachal Pradesh also highlights the ineffectiveness of the Central Government and the independent Human Rights Organizations to prevent such atrocities from being perpetrated on the displaced persons by locals. This has been mainly due to the unwillingness of the State Government to provide any support for rehabilitation and the situation is compounded by the lack of any consistent law to deal with refugees/displaced persons. Such a void has led to adhocism and arbitrariness in the adoption of policies and also the dependency of the solutions on the political will of the State Government. The absence of a well defined refugee protection regime continues to make shelter seeking people as vulnerable as ever.

The key point which has been made in this article is the issue of repatriation, at the root of which lies the land issue. The 1997 Accord between the Government of Bangladesh and the main organization of the indigenous people led the Government of Bangladesh to believe that virtually all the problems in CHT have been resolved. Although the Accord paved a way for the return of Jummas, but this was not to be so in reality. The land issue remained at the core of the problem. The people who were repatriated with the promise of return of their land faced bitter disappointment as their land had been occupied by the Muslims who had migrated to the fertile lands of CHT and were not willing to return the land. It is observed-“*The land question, the principal reason for the repeated exodus of the people of CHT, continues to remain unresolved*”. The quest for home within their own homeland is no longer a dream, but it continues to be a distant reality.

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Thongbam Inaotomba

I do agree with the notion, ‘the conflict in Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh is in the last resort a conflict over land’. In fact, the uprooted indigenous people of CHT launched armed movement only to regain their traditional homeland snatched by outsiders in wake of development, nation building and suppressive militarization and Islamization.

Covering an area of 14,200 square kilometers, the Chittagong Hill Tracts, lying in the southeastern corner of Bangladesh bordering Indian states of Tripura and Mizoram and Chin and Rakhain states of Myanmar, has been home to several indigenous tribes namely Chakma, Bawm, Chak, Khumi, Khyang, Lushai, Marma, Mro, Pankho, Tanchangay, Tripura, all belonging to the Tibeto-Burman and Mon-Khmer families.

Since time immemorial, these indigenous people enjoyed overall supremacy and control over their land till the British began to take interest of the region and formally annexed in 1860. The British administrators however continued with the overall policy of noninterference, thus enabling the indigenous people, the control over their land though trading was principally in the hands of few outsiders. The British even provided some safeguards relating to autonomous status, including the judicial, administrative and legal measures in addition to certain procedural mechanisms.

Upto 1930, entry and residence of non-indigenous people to CHT region was strictly prohibited and the region was even designated as autonomous area by the Government of India Act in 1935 and such status was enjoyed by the indigenous people till 1964, when the post colonial government of East Pakistan and later Bangladesh abolished the special status given to the CHT people. This enabled people from the plains to settle and acquire land in the CHT and thus created serious threat to the life and lands of the indigenous people. The first political blow and threat to the CHT people and their land, however, came when the territory was attached to the then East Pakistan much against their wishes. These indigenous people, in fact, wanted to be part of India when the British de-colonized the subcontinent in 1945 and the two nation theory was adopted.

Apprehensive about the intentions of the CHT people and flimsy relationship, the post colonial government of Pakistan and later Bangladesh implemented successive suppressive measures that fuelled discontent amongst the indigenous people. Successive regimes in Pakistan and later Bangladesh, keeping in view of its strategic location and nation building, followed a consistent policy of marginalising CHT people.

The construction of the Kaptai Dam in 1964 which led to the inundation to vast agricultural lands in CHT forced several thousands of the CHT people to flee their traditional homeland and took refuge within the region and India.

The Bangladesh government later followed the policy of settling plains people in the fertile land of CHT and in no time the region was overrun by Bengali speaking Muslims from plains of overpopulated Bangladesh.

The discontent CHT people had no other option but to took to arms to regain their homeland and started armed movement in a bid to regain control over their own land. In the subsequent military and suppressive action of the Bangladesh government, thousands of CHT people, for the second time, had to flee their homeland and take refuge in neighboring Indian states. As a result the aggressive settlement policy and militarization, the CHT now has a population of about 9,00,000 that is almost evenly divided between the Muslim settlers and the indigenous peoples.

With the changing global scenario, socioeconomic and geopolitical situations in South East Asia, the CHT refugees finally struck a deal with the Bangladesh government in 1997 and returned back. However, the peace accord failed to reflect genuine hopes and aspirations of the CHT people besides failing to fulfill main demands including restoration of traditional land-rights and withdrawal and resettlement of the Bengali settlers. Many of the returnees have not got their land and on the contrary settlers have refused to vacate the area they occupied in the CHT region. The land question, the principal reason for the repeated exodus of the people of CHT hence remained unresolved and the uprooted indigenous people of CHT had no other option but to took to the arms to regain their traditional homeland.

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Nirekha De Silva

In this essay I will argue that the conflict in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), is a conflict for belonging. A place where one belongs means a land where one's identity will be protected. Accordingly I will argue that the conflict in CHT is in the last resort is not only a conflict over land but also a conflict over identity. First I will describe the events of forceful displacement in CHT. Then I will briefly portray the ethnic composition and culture of CHT. Thirdly I will present a brief analysis of protective and discriminatory policies adopted by successive governments of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh regarding the CHT community. Afterwards I will present the need for the search of belonging in spite of discontinuities. Finally I will reveal the Indira-Mujib Agreement of 1972, the AAPSU uprising and PCJSS Peace demands to illustrate the link between land and identity.

The people of CHT were forcefully displaced^[1] twice. Once when the Government of then undivided Pakistan decided to construct the Kaptai dam on the Karnaphuli river in 1960s. The Second time was at the wake of the movement of self-determination in 1980s, when the policies of successive Bangladeshi regime encouraged people from the plains to settle in the hill areas. Being displaced means losing their land and property and in a sense you can call the conflict in CHT is in the last resort a conflict over land. Yet the displacement of the CHT community was a consequence of unfair and discriminatory government policies. The discriminatory policies have a strong connection with the identity of the CHT Community.

The CHT has three hill districts of Bangladesh. Namely, Rangamati, Bandarban, and Khagrachhari. CHT is home to Bawn, Chak, Chakma, Khumi, Khyang, Lushai, Marma, Mro, Pankho, Tanchangya and Tripura groups of indigenous people. Among them, Chakmas and Marmas are numerically the largest groups. The CHT people differ from the majority Bengali population of the plains in race, religion and language. They are Mongoloid, Tibeto-Berman, and Mon-Khmer origin, and have similarities with the neighbours in North-east India, Myanmar and Thailand in appearance and culture. They are predominantly Buddhists though some of them are Hindus as well as Christians. They have their own language.

To protect the identity of the indigenous CHT community, including their customs, traditions, beliefs and culture, the Government of India Act 1935 designated the CHT as a Totally Excluded Area. The area was thus recognized as an indigenous area until 1964, when its special status as a separate area was finally abolished and it was brought within the purview of the legislature of Pakistan.^[2] As long as a state safeguard the identity of vulnerable and/or indigenous communities by adopting relevant measures, the community feel protected. Yet, when the authorities disregard the need of protecting the minorities, the indigenous and the vulnerable communities and when they start adopting discriminatory policies, it becomes a threat to minority community. As Chaudhury says, the decision to annex the CHT to Pakistan, a state formed and organized on the basis of the need for a homeland for Indian Muslims, was a travesty of justice as the successive regimes of Pakistan and later Bangladesh followed a consistent policy of marginalizing the CHT community within the polity of the nation.^[3] Abolishing the special status given to CHT in 1964, constructing the Kaptai dam and encouraging people from the plains to settle in hill area are some discriminatory decisions taken by the Pakistani and successive Bangladeshi regimes.

The threat to the community in CHT despite the discriminatory policies was the need to search for belonging and need to seek and establish continuity in their lives by making meaningful links with the past, present and future.^[4] The discontinuities faced

by the CHT community included geographic, material, cultural and relational discontinuities. Despite the discontinuities they possessed and still possess a personal and collective history, which began long before the crisis that caused their flight from their homes and countries.^[5] It is not possible to expect or demand the refugees to forget their identities or to expect them to assimilate into a new identity in order to give them acceptance and belonging. It is the responsibility of the state of the CHT community or the host communities to acknowledge the differences and to accommodate the refugees or IDPs.

Under the Indira-Mujib Agreement of 1972, it was decided that India and not Bangladesh would be responsible for all migrants who entered India before 25 March 1971, and therefore the Chacka and Hajong refugees who came to India from the erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) before 25 March 1971 would be considered for the grant of Indian Citizenship. But they remained stateless even after the amendment of the Indian Citizenship Act in 1985, and since their resettlement, the Chakmas and Hajongs have been illegally denied Indian citizenship and systematically deprived of other fundamental rights.^[6] In August 1994 the situation in Arunachal Pradesh underwent a drastic transformation following the ultimatum issued by the AAPSU, which aimed at evicting the Chakmas and Hajongs from Arunachal Pradesh. The justification made by the AAPSU was 'the Chakmas did not come from a neighbouring district or province of India, and that they also belonged to a different language, custom and religion without any local roots whatsoever.'^[7] The justification portrays the link between land and identity.

The Peace Accord between the Government of Bangladesh and PCJSS that was signed on 2nd December 1997 promised the hill people restitution of their land, greater participation in government, and a reduction in the Bangladesh military presence in the CHT. The PCJSS's demands revolved around three fundamental issues: (1) Autonomy for the CHT, (2) Withdrawal of the Bangladeshi settlers from the CHT and (3) Demilitarisation of the area.^[8] The demands of the PCJSS could be interpreted as demands for a land where the CHT community's identity is recognized and protected.

In this paper, I have argued the conflict in CHT is not only a conflict over land but a conflict for belonging. The conflict for belonging in CHT is a search to live in a land where one could protect one's identity.

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On reading "Development Induced Displacement in Pakistan" in Refugee Watch and "Pakistan: Development and Disaster" in Internal Displacement in South Asia comment on how the development model that has been favoured by the Pakistani state have led to large scale dispossession and displacement of people?

Tasmia Persoob

Development induced displacement is a relatively new phenomenon in South Asian region because it started after the end of British colonial era. In the above-mentioned two articles, author Atta ur Rehman Sheikh has portrayed skilfully how the Government of Pakistan's decision regarding various large scale development projects have displaced millions of people and disrupted their livelihood. These two articles give a clear idea how poorly planned projects can have adverse affect on the lives of the people. As the issue of IDP does not get much attention among the academia and the civil society, the author's initiative to explore the issue is noteworthy.

"Pakistan: Development and Disaster": This chapter gives a brief description of the political and economical scenario of Pakistan (Influence of Modernization Theory) when most of these dams were constructed. The author then cites the examples of Mangla dam, Tarbela dam, Ghazi-Barotha dam, Kalabagh dam, Kaptai dam and Chasma Right Bank Canal (CRBC). Most of these dams were constructed in the 1960s and 1970s. The Ghazi-Barotha dam is the new project of the Government. The author provides useful information on these dams like when each was constructed, total amount spent on the construction, the number of people displaced, their sufferings, Government's role, role of the donors, the role of the civil society etc.

The construction of Mangla dam displaced more than 50,000 people and a total 81,000 people was affected. These people were resettled in different provinces and got very little compensation for the loss of their homes and agricultural lands. But still there are those who still have not got their fair share of land as compensation. The same goes for Tarbela dam. Total 96,000 people were displaced and 120 villages came under water. A comprehensive resettlement programme was adopted but resettlement is still incomplete. After 37 years 200 families are waiting to get their claims settled. The new Ghazi Barotha project would displace 21,653 people, has a resettlement plan. But the concerned institutions are accused of corruption in terms of giving the compensation. The Kalabagh dam has a resettlement project too but the construction of the project is being delayed because of the conflict of interest between the political parties. The Kaptai dam displaced 100,000 people and almost half of them migrated to India and still not recognised as refugees by the UNHCR. The completion of Chasma Right Bank Canal project will dislocate 2000 people. The construction of highways also displaced people and has a poor record in giving compensation and arranging resettlement. In all the projects are marked by inadequate compensation, delayed resettlement and loss of livelihood. The author has convincingly argued that these projects played an important role in the economic development of Pakistan but they have caused havoc in terms of displacement of people from their habitat.

After going through the two articles I found the following factors playing the lead role in displacement of people.

The influence of modernization theory played a role in the construction of these large-scale projects. Emulating the West uncritically was part of the Government policy that did not take into consideration if infrastructures would really benefit the society. The development projects were ill planned in the sense that it did not have any comprehensive plan for the resettlement and compensation for the affected people. And even if they had a plan it was not adequately implemented. The Government most of the time did not keep their promise. The Government even now does not have any national policy for resettlement, which has made the situation even worse. While giving compensation there was misallocation of resources. Many people did not get their proper share even after 30-37 years. Concerned authorities misused their power, some of them resorted to corruption and most of the time they were unwilling to help the affected people. There is a lack of commitment from Government's part for the implementation of resettlement guidelines and there is no scope for accountability. Inadequate funding for the compensation for the displaced people was another reason for displacement of people.

The absence of a new pragmatic law is another factor behind the large-scale population displacement. The Land Acquisition Act of 1894 has been applied to acquire land and resettle uprooted communities but this law is not a comprehensive law. The law does not address modern day problems, challenges and needs. There has been some modification but it's not enough. The Act does not address the resettlement, livelihood issues and cultural aspects of the affected people, which is also very important. Moreover the law is interpreted in different ways by revenue departments or the land acquisition collectors, which creates contradictions.

The role of the donor agencies also needs to be assessed. Their role in implementing the resettlement programme has been found to be very minimal.

There is lack of community participation, which makes the situation even worse. There is no proper mechanism to inform or readdress about the problems.

In order to avoid such adverse affect following issues should be taken under consideration: The Government should formulate a national resettlement policy. Each project should follow the rules of Pakistan Environmental Protection Act, 1997. There should be a separate monitoring institute, which will make sure every project is following the same guidelines. The Land Acquisition Act 1894 should be amended to meet the needs of the present time. The donors should incorporate the resettlement plan in the project and perform their duties accordingly.

These two articles have brought forward some important issues, which were neglected in the past and have provided important policy recommendations.

How does lack of control over resources lead to large scale displacement of women?

Simran Chadha

Analyzing the politics of displacement, by way of its links with capitalism and power hierarchies; this paper looks at the gendered implications of the same. Displacement entails destabilization and this would be analyzed with regard to the economic, legal and social implications that displacement has for women. Drawing on the studies of Meghna Guhathakurta, Ranabir Samadar and the report on engendering R& R policies, I classifying the term, for purposes of clarity under the following broad categories

a) Territorial displacement: Movement between territories, can be between nations thus giving rise the category of "illegal immigrant". However, displacement, when it occurs within the accepted national boundaries can be classified under the tropes of forced or voluntary migration.

b) Socio-economic displacement: A territorial physical displacement, for a women means an estrangement from the area, culture and terrain that she is accustomed to. This often translates to a loss of the means that provided her with economic independence and a sense of security, owing to familiar surroundings.

c) Identity displacement: By this term, I refer to the sense of marginalization that economic dependence, arising from a territorial and economic displacement brings about. In this respect displacement, for women, causes emotional and mental stress and these are significant factors, largely ignored in policy regarding rehabilitation.

Likewise, the word "resources" when applied to women, takes on meanings that go beyond the monetary. Resources here could mean access to speech, in terms of being disarticulated or silenced on account of gender. It is here that social ideologies

seclusion, domestication and femininity play a crucial role in the disempowerment women, from the work force as well as at a decision making level, within networks of family and community.

With the onset of globalization and its narrative of development, one finds wide spread changes within developing nations. These changes promote industrialization, urbanization, privatization and promise employment opportunities. However, what is being unleashed is a mode of unequal development and augmented class divisions within a civic society. A capitalist mode of development is based on two premises- wage labor and profit. Changing the means of production, reduces the population into either of the above two categories - those with the capital/power/muscle power and others dependant on them. While the glaring disparity between the rich and poor is on the increase; what is often obfuscated is the insidiously subtle imbalance in gender relations. In this scenario of domination and exploitation, at all levels, while the worst hit are the

marginalized and disarticulate sections of society- the dalits, the tribals and women- it is the last category that is under scrutiny here.

The New Economic Policy of 1991 promotes the private acquisition of land for purposes of development. This entails the displacement of large segments of society who were earlier dependent on the land for sustenance. How does the experience of women differ from that of men and in what manner do their narrative's, alert us to the urgent need for gender sensitivity required in policies of rehabilitation?

The case study of the shrimp industry in south- western Bangladesh, reflects the changing status of women within this transitory society - a society moving from an agriculture based, sustenance economy based on social capital to an export oriented agro-based shrimp industry, a cash economy. The area under study, are the coastal districts Bagerhat, Khulna and Satkhira that house part of the largest mangrove forests, the Sunderbans. This delinking of the people from the land, had serious repercussions on the lives of women. Women were hitherto equal partners in the agriculture process -tilling of the land, threshing, storing of the seeds etc. Cattle and poultry rearing provided an additional income as did kitchen gardening. The staple crop being rice, hence food was never in short supply. As equal participants, they had a say in matters of savings and could afford themselves an occasional ornament. However with globalization and the demand to cater to the needs of a foreign market, this area has undergone a rapid structural and systemic transformation. Shrimp cultivation, for an export oriented market, has led to changing patterns of lifestyle.

Operating under the ideologies of domestication and seclusion middle class women do not or cannot go out to work on the shrimp farms, as wage labor is below their dignity. Economic degradation due to the shrimp cultivation has rendered the area saline and unfit for even as much as growing fodder or rearing cattle. This marginalizes women to a large extent, creating a wide disparity between their "private world" and that of the men- the "public" workplace. The oppression, often suffered in silence is generated along lines of loss of an independent identity, self-worth and worse still, through the domestic violence that is on the rise. Dependence is further augmented, as cash earnings from the shrimp cultivation must be saved in banks and not through social credit schemes as before.

Consent to lease out land, is often achieved through muscle power thereby generating fear through the perennial presence of mafia in the area. Violence has become a systematized almost institutionalized feature in social life. The need for male protection becomes paramount in a woman's life in such circumstances.

The labor employed on the farms is brought from the outside, thus rendering even the male members of a family, unemployed. This forces them to cross borders in search of work. Women are left to fend not only for themselves but also for their children. The worst hit are the poor women, forced to work on the farm as the means of survival. Natural dangers - crocodiles, sharks and tigers make them easy prey.

Trafficking in flesh thrives in such predatory circumstances. One such story is that of "Shefali", by Ranabir Samaddar in "Marginal Nations". Classified as an illegal immigrant and deported back to her "nation", she has faced oppression at all levels - familial, domestic, village and state. Faced with such debilitating circumstances, she has resigned herself to "fate" or destiny. What Shefali terms "fate", deconstructs into the metanarrative of state-level capitalist policies aimed at serving the interests of the rich and the powerful. What is evident from her story, is the need to understand the implications of being a "woman" in such a scenario and what sort of rehabilitation would cater to her needs.

Studying the report on R&R reveals the blind spots regarding gender in the World Bank policies on resettlement, often laying the blame on the borrowing countries government. reports how women are not given land in lieu of land . What was also questioned are the banks links with transnational cooperation.

Expanding the argument, Chitroopa Palit, pointed out that in the Sardar Sarovar project, women with land titles were not given land for land. Questioning privatization, Walter Fernandes pointed out that the change from community to individual ownership, displaced women economically, much more than it did the men. In the NALCO resettlement, only 7 women found re-employment.

Moving to the crux of the problem, regarding policies that marginalize women, Lyla Mehta sees this as happening, because: "women's rights, assets and spheres of control often centre around informal institutional arrangements which are rarely captured in and understood by policy makers and risk being undermined in the course of resettlement". Thus, finally, what emerges is the urgent need for listening to women's problems and incorporating them into the drafting of the R&R bill.

On the basis of your reading of Meghna Guhathakurta's article "Globalization, Class and Gender Relations: The Shrimp Industry in South-western Bangladesh," Report on the Workshop on Engendering R & R (both available in CRG website) and the chapter entitled "Shefali" in Marginal Nations, analyse how lack of control over resources have led to large-scale displacement of women?

Jessica Skinner

A lack of control over resources is one factor that leads to the displacement of men, women and children. Women, though, experience such displacement in very specific ways. Patriarchal attitudes and societies reduce women's control over resources

causing both gender-specific forms and impacts of displacement. The removal of land, resources or male patronage has thus lead to the forced displacement of many women within and across borders.

In the world today large international and transnational companies are gaining greater control of the international market and global resources. Developing countries and most importantly the citizens of those countries bear the brunt of this bulldozing effect. Governments are often culpable too, encouraging such developments, offering financial and political support to large companies with little regard for the rights of local residents. Displacement from residential and productive land often ensues causing impoverishment, reducing livelihood options, increasing labour migration and breaking up families. As Guathakurta's article on the shrimp industry in Bangladesh demonstrates shrimp companies are buying up or monopolising large expanses of land, including Government owned *khas* land that is officially set aside for the settlement of the landless. Local residents with little to no control over this resource, especially in the face of the combined power of the companies and the government, are being forced off their land. Large development projects often have a similar impact, displacing many people from their land and their livelihoods. Rehabilitation, although offered, is too often inadequate, failing to recognise people's rights to resources or adequately compensating losses.

Although these types of displacement do not only affect women they are gender specific and the impact on women, their lives and livelihoods is tremendous. Women's livelihoods, unlike men's, often depend solely on access to homestead, common and *khas* land. Important sources of income both monetary and in-kind include livestock rearing, poultry farming, kitchen gardening, cultivation of land close to the home, the processing of any produce and in some cases gathering produce from common land. Thus women are disproportionately affected when this land is taken away, particularly the poorest or most vulnerable women, such as female-headed households who are heavily dependent on access to common land. In Bangladesh women are large recipients of *khas* land or should be had this land not been sold to large developers. Men frequently have greater control over land and can sometimes benefit from the waged labour that companies bring. Women on the other hand, especially women in countries with strict purdah norms, have less access to this employment. Women are thus displaced from productive land and often forced to migrate to find employment.

In situations where ownership of land and assets are patrilineal women have little control over productive resources. Lack of control over resources has not only led to a large scale displacement of women it has also led to gender-specific problems during relief and rehabilitation. Women's control over resources is limited and often not recognised in planned resettlement. Rehabilitation policies often ignore the income and livelihoods of women, turning once productive and self-sufficient women into dependents and contributing to the impoverishment of households. In many cases compensation is handed over to the male head and women and their specific needs are not taken into consideration. Men in these situations, both in terms of planned and unplanned displacement often find their ability to support the family limited. Lack of control over resources leaves men reliant on waged labour or labour migration. Lack of jobs and heavy dependency on male income often impacts on the confidence and mental peace of many, causing them to abandon their families or rendering them unable to work. Women in these situations sometimes have to provide for the whole family with a limited access to resources that has been exacerbated by insensitive rehabilitation and compensation programmes.

A lack of control over resources in this respect and in the general structure of many patriarchal societies may even force women to seek refuge outside their country of origin. Women headed households or poor households with many daughters may struggle to find enough money to cover dowries or support single women. In these situations women sometimes find themselves pushed into situations of forced marriage, trafficking or migration for prostitution and/or begging. This migration is forced in as much as their economic conditions depend upon such movement or in that forced marriage and trafficking is carried out by relatives and/or under false pretences. These women may be trafficked over the borders into different states or displaced into cities where they can find work. Their situations may be insecure and vulnerable, but they may also find that access to employment at the very least reduces their economic vulnerability (Samaddar 1999).

Resource exploitation by large companies and politicians and the gendered control of resources has been the root cause behind many situations of forced female migration and the specifically gendered impacts of such displacement. If women's use of resources was adequately recognised and compensated and if control over resources became more equitable, resources that women depend upon may not be so easily withdrawn and women may not find themselves in such vulnerable positions when this happens. Men would also find that a joint approach to income generation and resource management would ease the pressure on the whole family. If women were not treated as burdens due to their lack of control over resources the rate of abandonment may be reduced or girls might not be forced to cross borders and boundaries, illegally or unprotected.

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On the basis of your reading of Meghna Guhathakurta's article "Globalization, Class and Gender Relations: The Shrimp Industry in South-western Bangladesh," Report on the Workshop on Engendering R & R

Zobaida Nasreen

In response to the package of 'Women and Equality' launched by United Nations and its message flung across the world, a large number of poor women of Bangladesh are getting more involved in the economic world though it is also important to note that still the role and presence of women in some of the productive sectors are rarely acknowledged in the census and other public documents.

Based on her information collected from both primary and secondary sources from three Upazilla (Shyamnagar, Kaliganj and Fakirhat) in the south western region of Bangladesh, Dr. Meghna Guhathakurta has correctly identified the field of women's marginalization through lack of control on resources. In her article "Globalization, Class and Gender Relations: The Shrimp Industry in South-western Bangladesh," Guhathakurta diagnoses the process of women transiting from 'subsistence economy' to 'market economy'. It is understood that the women who contributed to the agriculture sector as part of duty and for which they did not use to receive cash for the job. Introduction of shrimp mono culture in those areas the women were displaced from their traditional profession causing a large scale migration in the following ways which Guhathakurta cites-

1. Before intervention of shrimp cultivation, poor women were involved themselves in land- based livelihood which also provided them the opportunities for cattle and poultry rearing or kitchen gardening. But after the introduction of shrimp cultivation women were deprived from their rights as a result of eviction from land and resources. And it is also important to add that the local women are not recruited as a labor in these farms, which causes unemployment of poor women.
2. Women of these areas are particularly victims of the socio-economic transformation in various processes, such as grabbing of agricultural lands, where women previously sent their cattle for grazing and poor family often earned income by looking after the livestock which they could do as a part of their normal household works. Now women feel deprived of their rights to the land now being used for shrimp cultivation of that area. With this addition it is noted that shrimp farming have destroyed the opportunity of the poor women, which also causes a large number of displacement.
3. The question of insecurity for women having dual identity as laborer and as women is also found in Guhathakurta's analysis when she traced the nature of authorities. Poor women, who lost the rights on land and other resources, were bound to work in those farms, while working in the shrimp cultivation. At time of any danger they do not get any help from the authorities, nevertheless it also added to their concerns. As a consequence, these landless women sometimes were subjected to trafficking and sold to Pakistan, India, Middle East where they were forced to work as sex worker and housemaids. I personally think that they may be called at this stage as 'forced women migrant labor' (My observation). Due to their concern about health hazard and salinity of shrimp farm they also protested against it by organizing two remarkable movements leaded by women.

Due to the patriarchal nature of the society women's right and control over land and resources are not equally recognized in Bangladesh society. And it is women who even then are trying to maintain control over the land by keeping themselves in the private sphere. The type of family and households of women workers in shrimp factory are not well visualized from this article, which sometimes plays an important role in exercising women's power. After going through the paper, readers may have a feeling that something is missing in her analysis for example, how did the poor women adopt or have adapted with this transitional period when they found that their control over the land and land based resources have been wrested from them..

The chapter entitled "Shefali" in Marginal Nations, analyse how lack of control over resources have led to large-scale displacement of women?

Dr. Ranabir Samaddar in his book 'Marginal Nation' also focused the process of women marginalization in the chapter 'Shefali' Samaddar has highlighted the causes of displacement and migration of poor women in Bangladesh based on data gathering from primary and secondary sources, regarding lost of their control on land and other resources. They did not get any other way but displacement or migration to other countries. The portrait of 'Shefali' as a case presented in the book, obviously visualized a scenery of poor women's condition in Bangladesh. He has clearly pointed out some factors responsible for women migration, which can also be treated as causes of loosing control over the land and land resources -

1. Expansion of shrimp cultivation has created unemployment of poor women, domestic violence, polygamy, and process of lumpenization among the poor section particularly pushed women more in the street.
2. The system of dowry for the poor women also treated as causes of a large-scale displacement of women.
3. As I conceived, from his article it is found that, migration of poor women can be counted as a 'protest' or 'resist strategy' against the society/ establishment

From the writings of Samaddar, it is very clear that poor women are facing a lot of hazards, and the effect of industrialized development program (such as shrimp cultivation), causing occupational transformation to the poor women and this enhancing displacement. But the situation of women in the middle-income families whose livelihood were also primarily based on land-based resources was out of his discussion or argument and which of the article can create a misunderstanding that polygamy is practiced only among poor families. The readers may raise a demand for knowing the brief history of displacement of women. In his article, it was also difficult to identify the coping strategy of poor women with the changing form of employment.