

## **Internal Labour Migration: Does it Fit with the Sustainable Rural Livelihoods Framework in Rural Bangladesh?**

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### **Abstract**

*This article looks into the poorest, who move away from rural-rural and rural-urban areas in Bangladesh in order to look for work, overcome their vulnerable situation and improve their livelihoods. However, its main endeavor is not only espousing the positive but also negative impacts of labour migration. It shows the reasons for moving out, and the capital assets by which they pursue themselves as migrants. How the structures and processes function in promoting migration at the individuals and households levels is a part of this article. Finally, this article tries to see how much the sustainable rural livelihoods framework fit with the findings and existing literature. It has found that the major parts of this framework fits with the findings and the existing literature.*

**Keywords :** Labour migration, sustainable, framework, poverty and livelihoods.

### **Preamble**

Bangladesh is amongst one of the poorest developing countries in the world, a nation with a small area but a huge population. Within this populace, many different classes of people live in largely rural areas. Some of them are rich, some are middle class, but most live constantly on the poverty line, chronically poor, their families having lived in this vulnerable situation for many generations for various reasons. With a view to getting out of this vulnerability they take initiatives to move away as a key livelihood strategy. This article is about the role of migration in the livelihoods of this category of people, who migrate as labourers away from rural-rural and rural-urban areas in Bangladesh. However, some cannot migrate because they lack the resources and the finance, but also sometimes the physical strength and health, to travel or the support to do so, as they struggle to balance maintaining their families whilst looking for better prospects. Others, in the meantime do manage to migrate, maybe out of desperation or because they are forced to do so by natural disaster or socio-political pressure, lack of employment opportunities, low wages and wage discrimination. After moving, of course, many of the migrants face an assortment of problems as well finding several opportunities at their destinations. These problems are reflected by a new variety of problems which the family members back at home face as well as enjoying a number of benefits. Thus, their livelihoods are, in a sense, enhanced on the one hand and equally worsened on the other. In this way the main endeavour of this article is to justify the

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sustainable rural livelihoods framework in the context of rural poverty in Bangladesh.

### **Methodological approach**

The methodology used for this research was strongly connected with the livelihoods of the extreme poor. The study followed a qualitative approach of systematic process for conceptualising and understanding the extreme poor's livelihoods. The issue "migration" emerges from the theme selection process at the level of field exploration. On the basis of LEP methodological framework, the study villages of the Livelihoods of the Extreme Poor project were chosen purposively to represent each of the eight broad agro-ecological zones in Bangladesh. From each agro-ecological zone one thana was selected which contained a high concentration of the 'extreme poor'. Then two villages were selected from each thana, one close to (termed 'central') and one far away from (termed 'remote') the thana headquarters for detailed study. One hundred and ten case studies were migration related out of 360 from sixteen villages.

This research enquiry was focused on qualitative methods and the study used a number of tools and techniques developed on the basis of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) principles. It also used general group discussion, observation and one-to-one in-depth semi-structured interviews. The PRA approach was found appropriate at the community level to generate discussion on livelihood strategies and to promote understanding of vulnerability. A well-being and ill-being ranking exercise was also carried out by using PRA approach that helped the study to identify the vulnerable extreme poor group and people from the community. At the household level one-to-one in-depth semi-structured interviews were taken in view of getting familiarised with different dimensions of the extreme poor people's migration.

### **Reasons of labour migration: necessity or choice or both?**

Labour migration is an integral part of life that influences the livelihoods of the majority of the poor households in rural Bangladesh. There are a number of factors, which cause migration. Haan et al (2002) point to environmental change, population growth, an increasing economic pressure or a decline in social cohesion. As Hossain (2003) states, the poorest people in Bangladesh frequently migrate, in groups or alone, because of natural disasters such as floods, droughts, cyclones, tidal surges, and social pressures like wage discrimination, low wages and lack of employment. Hossain (2003) suggests that those who can migrate from place to place looking for higher wages, food, accommodation, clothes, savings etc. These factors, acting as incentives for the working class to migrate are called 'pull' factors. On the other hand, some people are compelled by conditions within their areas to migrate. In these cases usually some factor like political pressure forced them to migrate. These are called 'push' factors. The causes of push and pull factors behind migration are economic, social and

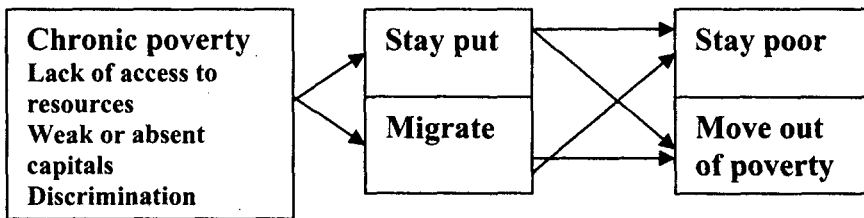
political. Haan (2002) states that neoclassical models consider migration both as a choice for the poor and the only option for survival after alienation from their local lands. Ellis (2000) argues that individuals and households pursue diversification as a livelihood strategy for two overarching considerations such as necessity and choice. Necessity denotes involuntary and distressful decisions, while choice denotes voluntary and proactive decisions, which is viewed as individual choices in terms of economic decision-making and inter-temporal family contacts. Davies (1996) considers the reasons for migration as 'survival and choice'; Hart (1994) says 'survival and accumulation'; and Bigsten (1996) says 'push versus pull'.

Whatever, they articulate Haan (2002) says people movements do not occur only for economic reasons but that social and cultural institutions such as local customs and ideologies are also responsible. Economic approaches actually focus on individual and household aspects that accentuate the positive side of migration. On the other hand, Marxism and structuralist theories focus on political and other institutions that accentuate negative sides of migration. At the same time sociological and anthropological approaches do not concentrate on one unit of analysis, but rather espouse a complex picture of the consequences of migration. The decision to move away from rural areas depends on perceived wage differences plus the expectation of the guarantee of employment at the destination. Haan (2002) argues that the push of land scarcity is not so important as the pull of high wages in explaining migration decisions. As he (2002: 26) explains, 'push' and 'pull' migration are the twin children of inequality in the same sort of village; but they are also sources of new inequality. In order to explain the relationship between migration and poverty, Skeldon (2002) argues that it would be unwise to draw a simple conclusion that migration leads to poverty eradication. Rather, migration leads to increasing poverty and poverty, leads to promoting migration, a seemingly unending vicious cycle. But it is important to note that the reasons of labour migration, both necessity and choice or pull and push, depends upon the nature and dimensions of poor and poverty. The study reveals that the transient and extreme poor, to a greater extent, are compel to migrate because the question of their survival. On the other hand, the chronic poor are also bound but most of them are incapable in moving away, as described earlier. Simultaneously, the middle classes of people, a few cases, migrate but almost of them do not consider migration as necessity rather choice in terms of their demand and necessary.

#### **A linkage among capital assets, the poor and migration**

The extremely poor are less mobile than the transient poor because of the nature of their poverty and, consequently, their social and financial resources. While the transient poor may somehow manage money and initiate to move out with an intention of enhancing their lives and livelihoods, the extremely poor are not often capable of this. Wood (2003) describes the typical extremely poor as

having short-term ill health, being short-term unemployed, being seasonally dependent on income and consumption, as migrants and resettled people and so on. Similarly, the interactions of the chronically extreme poor are those of a non-idiosyncratic poverty (Wood, 2003) including inequality, hostile class relations, exploitation, concentration of unaccountable power and social exclusion. Although most of the extremely poor have human capital such as skills, health, the ability to labour and knowledge, plus social capital, namely, networks and connectedness and relationships of trust, reciprocity and exchange (DfID Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, 1997), they are not capable of migration owing to a lack of sufficient funds. Wood (2003) pinpoints the problem, that although the peasant society attempts to gain new flows of income through a variety of ways, migration still seems the most potential option, an option which relies heavily on transferable human capital, personalised networks and institutionalised social capital. A few of the extremely poor can migrate, but sometimes even they fail to fulfill their expectations due to a lack of social and financial capitals, depicted in the following figured by Kothari (2003: 646).



Hossain (2003) suggests that the social network, including neighbours, friends, close relatives and the intermediary class network like Maji (who manage work), is treated as a form of social capital from which the majority of the poor reap as much dividend as they can. Mosse et al (2002) state that this social network promotes hunting for jobs, working conditions and levels of income. They add that those who are fortuitous invest social and symbolic capital, which helps them manage to get urban work. Farely (1999, in Mosse et al) says "Migration is mostly about survival, but also a bit about adventure." But the role of an outsider is somewhat different from the other networks because of the nature of the help. Mosse et al (2002) again mention that labour is supplied through multi-tier contract groups such as contractors, subcontractors, labour gang leaders and piece-rate workers. Bigsten (1996, in Haan) says that in bringing up a 'new economic' approach, household decisions and personal networks are the core.

Kothari (2003) shows a clear-cut relationship between capitals, exclusion and migration and proposes that the causes and consequences of exclusion and discrimination are created due to different types of capitals, which enable or limit the possibility of migration. Migration actually represents a dilemma because

some might be better off after moving and equally some may end up in a worst situation than before. In general, the poor villagers of Bangladesh routinely face vulnerable periods in the winter and the rainy seasons, and, hoping to overcome the adversity, they migrate from place to place for days, months or even years.

### **Labour migration: the structures and processes**

In terms of promoting labour migration of the people in rural Bangladesh, structures and processes play an important role which determines who will move away and who will stay put. Amongst these structures and processes many factors such as gender, age and skill of individuals at the household and community levels. Haan et al (2002) propose that sustainable livelihoods are related to some indicators of household and community such as poverty, well-being and capabilities, resilience and their natural resource. They mention two institutions, which have strong impacts on migration, namely network, household structure and management. Haan (2002) states that gender has a huge role in understanding the institutions that shape migration processes. Having mentioned the activities of men and women Hampshire (2002) points out that men are involved initially in productive ago-pastoral work such as herding, sowing and harvesting whereas women are largely involved in domestic and reproductive activities such as preparing food, fetching water and childcare. Rogaly et al (2000) bring up three case studies which indicate that young women migrate ignoring their older members' will of the household. Haan and Rogaly (1999) mention the findings of Elmhirst where they uphold the changing ideologies of work of young women in factory. They again mention that the individuals within a household think about migration differently based on age and sex. On the other hand, Hossain (2003) shows the age and sex structure of the migrants in terms of the nature of work, physical strengths to do work and skill. All age groups of people are not capable of doing all kinds of work because of their lack of skills, techniques and physical strengths. The similar attributes are applicable to male and female members at the household level. For this households decide who will migrate and who will stay behind. Nevertheless, the study suggests that relatives and neighbours play a role in influencing on the decisions of households which refer to the structure of labour migration.

### **Positive outcomes and livelihoods**

The principal aim of the labour migrants is to earn money, eradicate their vulnerable plight and try to enhance their livelihoods as much as they can. The positive role of migration is to inspire by the hope of inheriting family members (Stark & Lucas, 1988). Like Stark & Lucas, many writers (Haan, 1999, 2002; Simmons et al, 1977; Schrieder & Knerr, 2000; Hossain, 2003; Mosse, 2003; Mogaly, 2003, Allen, 2003) mention some recuperating impacts of labour migration. These are as follows:

#### **Strengthening household financial Security**

Many migrants make some kind of gain, for example financial, from doing various types of work and working hard at them. The income from remittances

brings security and opportunity for those who are left behind (Allen, 2003). As Haan (1999) states, by reducing the uncertainty for the family and providing investment funds, migrants contribute livelihoods to those who stay behind. He also states that migrants get a comparatively higher wage than at their origin, which improves their situation at home. Simmons et al (1977) suggest that the income of the migrants helps the families in buying modern farm equipment, which increases agricultural productivity and also encourages further emigration. Schrieder & Knerr (2000) assert that migration secures household income and ensures social security. But the occupations of migrant males and females are not same. They do different types of work in different places and earn different amounts. Hossain (2003:35) mentions as an example, *Kafur (27) is a day labourer and the only income earner in his family. He had gone to a nearby town (Fakirhat) along with other villagers for three or four months at a time. He could earn 80-100 taka (£1 = 107 taka, as of March 2004) for a day of doing agricultural work. He said that within these three months he saved 2000 taka.*

### **Reducing food insecurity**

The income from migration enables them to meet their food demands. However, they have to face some sort of food insecurity at their destinations as in the places where they came from. They achieve their food security in various ways. Although migration does not play a major role in improving the family, its bi-directional exchanges of food and money are more important. Mosse et al (2003) say that although most migration can be individual and idiosyncratic modes of migration, a young migrant can provide better food for his family. If migrants can acquire cash, they invest in crop productive activities, which reduces their food insecurity (Schrieder & Knerr, 2000). Both cash and kind (rice) are very important for the migrants and those who stay behind (Rogaly, 2003). PROSHIKA (2003:38) found *Majeda, a 40-year-old woman. She went to Dhaka (the capital city of Bangladesh) to do domestic work in a rich man's home. She told PROSHIKA she could earn 400 taka and food per month for her job, whereas before she was earning nothing.*

### **Increasing status and securing accommodation**

The impact of migration is to buy luxury consumables for social status and land. Robert (1997) mentions that migrants invest remittances in agriculture, building houses, financing weddings and meeting dowries. David (1995) claims the opposite to Robert and argues that migrants invest very little of their money in agriculture. Taking another viewpoint, Helweg (1983) says that migrants spend remittances firstly on family maintenance and land productivity, secondly conspicuous consumption and lastly symbolic purposes. Earnings from migration reduce the need for farmers to sell small surpluses and they can save money, which they invest in building houses (Visaria, 1972 in Simmons). Afsar (2000:183-184) narrates *Lucky Khans' case study, describing how she replaced her thatched roof with a corrugated iron sheet from remittances. She came from*

*an extremely poor family. Ignoring her father's will, she went to Dhaka with the help of neighbours and friends. Initially she worked in a residence as a housemaid and afterwards she joined a ready-made garments factory. With her income her family is now able to survive and has even managed to repair their cottage to make it more secure and protected.*

### **Repaying loan**

Because of seasonal variations the poorest groups of people in rural Bangladesh do not get opportunity to work in the local areas. In order to survive they are compelled to take loans from the moneylenders (*Mahajan*). Several poor people are forced to repay the loan by earning some money by dint of migration. Mosse et al (2002) and Allen (2003) mention that younger migrants repay seasonal and longer-term loans, purchase households assets, and meet social obligations and emergencies. *Hasem is an agricultural day labourer went to southern part of Bangladesh. Before moving he, finding no alternative, borrowed little amount of money. He borrowed money not only at the time of migration but also some money for maintaining his family. Hasem altogether borrowed 1200 taka which he repaid after migration.*

### **Attaining human capital**

Labour migration is an opportunity to learn new skills, knowledge, technologies, to gain employment, expand contact networks, improve social relations in the city and earn more money than at their origins (Allen, 2003). Several migrants come back home with newly learned skills (Haan, 1997). After returning from their destinations migrants invest remittances in teaching institutions, something which enhance differentiation and inequality (Allen, 2003). Schrieder & Knerr (2000) suggest that by earning money from migration, migrants invest it in the education of their children: "Investment in children's education for off-farm employment is regarded as a long-term strategy to secure the household's livelihoods" (Hedden-Dunkhorst, 1993:16, in Schrieder & Knerr, 2000). *If Lucky's case is considered we notice that she has achieved some training from garments, which will enable her to earn money in a skill based job, as she and similarly skilled men and women are in demand.*

### **Negative outcomes and livelihoods**

Likewise, the recuperating outcomes of labour migration on livelihoods of migrants, there are some sorts of intimidating outcomes on the livelihoods of the migrants and their families which have been discussed by many writers. These outcomes are:

#### **Negative outcomes on the livelihoods of the migrants**

The migrants all face some sort of problem at their destinations. Their problems can concern accommodation, sending money to their village homes, health, physical security and security of the money earned in the urban setting. As

Mosse, et al (2002) mention, migrants can end up spending a few days without working because of sickness, poor living conditions, or mechanical failure. In this way, many writers (Hossain 2003; Mosse, 2002; Allen, 2003; Rogaly, 2003; Afsar, 2000; Schrieder & Knerr, 2000; Black, 2003) discuss a number of intimidating impacts, as follows:

### **Problems with accommodation**

Almost all the migrants, both male and female, face accommodation problems after migration. These people get the least paid jobs with the harshest working conditions, employers' who do not provide protection against risks of injury, living on insufficient allowances, poor diet, living in the open, drinking contaminated water and unhygienic sanitation. The poor living and working conditions and low standard of safety and sanitation combined with the hard work reduces the migrants' human and physical well being (Allen, 2003). Opposing this view Simmons et al (1977) mention that at their new destinations migrants have the benefit of higher living standards than their origins. Again Rogaly (2003) thinks that migrants face great difficulty owing to rough living conditions at their destinations. Migrants sleep in the open air where there is no sanitation or pure drinking water (Rogaly et al, 2003). Afsar (2000) claims the poorer section of migrants in the urban areas live in deplorable living conditions because they are not able to improve their housing structures. *One example from Hossain (2003:44) is of Nuru (18) who faced various hardships, including finding somewhere to live. He had difficulty securing accommodation, and once resorted to taking shelter on the veranda of a primary school.*

### **Problem sending money home**

In order to earn money people opt for migration and most of the time they face problems in sending money to their respective addresses. When they migrate to other places, usually they cannot leave any money behind for their families. So immediately after saving a little they try to send it home. But very often they face problems in sending money because few people can be found who are reliable. Those who are left behind suffer from anxiety and become hungry as the migrant relative is not there to provide food or money (Rogaly, 2003). *Depak Sarker, 55, is a practitioner of traditional veterinary medicine. He moves out for one or two months at a time, and comes back with the money he has made. He says that after accumulating the money he cannot send it back home because of the lack of reliable people to trust with the money (PROSHIKA, 2003:63).*

### **Health problems**

Migrants suffer from various diseases in the places of their migration. They can suffer from jaundice, liver cancer, tuberculosis, hepatitis or gastroenteritis and fever amongst others. Mosse et al (2002) mention that migrants suffer from ill health but the employers provide insufficient medicine. As Schrieder & Knerr (2000) point out, migrants do different types of work because of the variation of



the seasons, which compel them to encounter extreme heat, cold and rain. Some people suffer from eye injuries because of dust, which causes permanent damage to their eyesight afterwards. Women migrants face several health related problems such as personal hygiene, re-miscarriages and pregnancy complications. Allen (2003) mentions that because of mother's migration, children can become malnourished, neglected, unruly and truant schoolchildren. Afsar (2003) mentions that urban migrants suffer from water borne diseases such as diarrhoea, typhoid, jaundice and scabies because of common toilets, inadequate sanitation and lack of drainage and sewerage facilities. *Lucky has come off a poor family in the northern part of Bangladesh. One of his relatives managed a job in a readymade garment factory in Savar where she lived with her colleagues in a rented house. After a month she felt weakness and told her mates about her weakness. At last her mates took Lucky to hospital for treatment. The hospital authority reported that Lucky had been suffering from jaundice. Where Lucky and her mates were living the entire environment was not good for health because of contaminated water.*

### **Robbery and mugging**

The aim of migration by the extreme poor is to earn an income from the places where they move. Many migrants save some money to send back home as remittance. But they have no safe custody to leave their small savings. Some migrants lose their money to robbers. Some of them are mugged in the cities or towns where they come to work and others on their way home. Rogaly et al (2003) mentions that there is no security plan from the government to protect migrants from theft. Hossain (2003:16) tells the story of *Khalek Mredha*, 25, traveled to Feni (southern part of Bangladesh) to plant and harvest rice in the paddies there. *He recounts that thieves stole 2000 taka from him on the way. Now, Khalek Mredha has returned to his village where his deceased father once resided.*

### **Physical assault/harassment**

Some migrants have to endure physical assault or harassment. Both male and female migrants have faced this problem. Women face some additional difficulties in being vulnerable when walking long distances to collect water and fuel wood. Many migrants are socially excluded, feel a lack of respect and are humiliated by the outsiders (Mosse et al, 2002). Divorce rates are high among migrants' wives; they are sexually harassed due to the absence of spouses. At times migration breaks down the social and familial tie. For example, one woman from Bihar (India) says, "The woes of home are far better than the comforts of an alien land" (Allen, 2003). Another consequence of migration is to create conflict because of political and ideological differences between the origins and destinations (Simmons et al, 1977). The peasants migrate to urban areas, and their lack of political consciousness called "protoproletarians" described by McGee, may be increased because of their unfamiliarity with this

situation. *Harish Sarder and his family members frequently migrate to different places to work on agricultural land. One day he and his wife had some trouble with the local mastans, or gang members. They were harassing his wife, and teasing her in front of him. One day, he protested at their behaviour, and they beat him (PROSHIKA, 2003:96).*

### **Loss of necessary materials**

Several migrants have lost all their belongings, including their tools such as quilt-making tools, ornaments, money and, net and boats. They have lost through robbery, decay, or during the process of migration. In working places there is no security for their limited possessions. They not only lose materials but also social status, position and reputation because of their absence from home at a long-term destination (Mosse, et al, 2002). *Shaheen from southern part of Bangladesh told the study that he lost his quilt-making tools in Dhaka. Putting his quilt-making tools under his head one day he was sleeping on the road. After waking up in the morning he saw that there was no tools. Finding no way he returned his home (Hossain, 200:48).*

### **Death**

At times the nature and intensity of work is so dangerous that migrants cannot endure these. After suffering from severe diseases some of them, at last, die and some of them are physically handicapped. Rogaly et al (2003) mentions that after working hard seven migrants died untimely deaths suffering from tuberculosis, hepatitis or gastroenteritis in Eastern India. PROSHIKA (2003:35) describes the situation of *Usha Rani is a 60-year-old widow who lost her husband nearly 24 years ago. One fateful day, her husband with his two brothers had gone to Sundurban to catch fish. There, a tremendous wave washed over them, and all three men were lost. It was the beginning of a very painful, depressing, and vulnerable period for her. Beyond the emotional shock, they were left economically vulnerable because they had only done household work, and had no experience whatsoever in securing paid employment.*

### **Negative outcomes on the livelihoods of the left behinds**

Leaving behind their families migrants move out. Because of their absence the family members of the migrants face several problems, which are very difficult to minimise. These problems are so diverse that it shapes different new difficulties. Among these, the dominant problems are suffering from disease, occupying land, shopping, taking loan with high interest from moneylenders. Mosse et al (2002) propose that before migrating the extreme poor people are bound to take loans from their neighbours or better off relatives or have to sell crops to the same lenders at low rates. The money women migrants send to their husbands is sometimes spent on alcohol or gambling (Gamburd, 2000 in Allen). Hossain et al (2003) reveals that migrants' families face some problems such as

losing ornaments, money, houses, physical assault/harassment, difficulties in marrying off daughters and getting threatened by their own relatives.

Hossain (2003) writes that sometimes neighbours and influential people capture all the landed property left behind by migrants. He also finds that the family faces great difficulties in buying their daily necessities from the local market because there is no member to do the job in the absence of the head of the family. A different kind of problem troubled a 38-year-old man who went to Dhaka, leaving behind his family. He said that before migrating, he left little money for his family. Some miscreants harassed his wife and sister in his absence.

### **Justification: the framework, migration and the reality of Bangladesh**

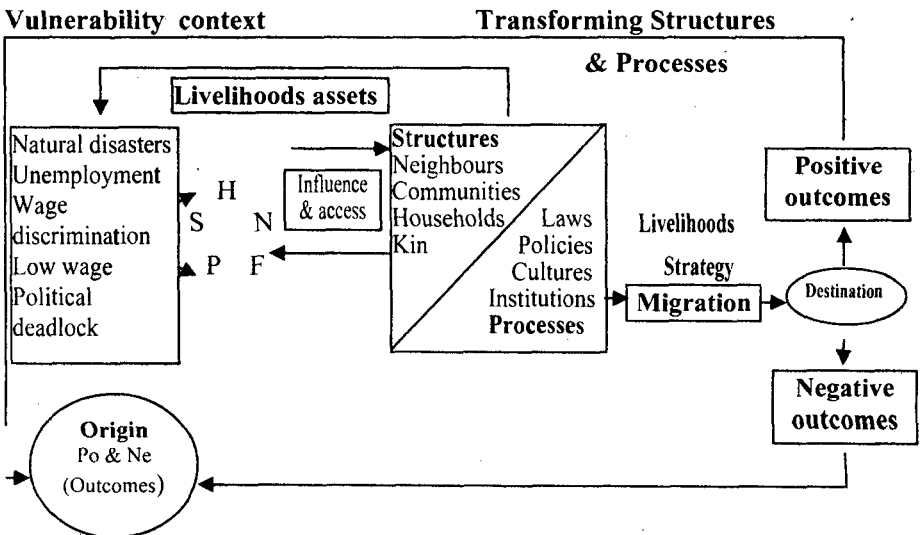
No doubt, it is really important to justify the sustainable rural livelihoods frameworks in the context of rural Bangladesh. The above discussion encompasses that this framework has emphasized firstly the vulnerable context for which the rural people move away in order to cope with the vulnerable situation or improve their livelihoods. The study has found that many reasons such as natural disasters, social calamities and some other social factors are responsible for the movement of the rural people from rural to urban and rural to rural areas. With the intention of moving away the poor, not the extreme poor, use some assets such as network which might be friends, neighbors and relatives. As a moving strategy network is common to all kinds of people but the differences are found in the case of financial asset because the extreme poor people are unable to manage sufficient money for their movement. In addition, the physical strength, one indicator of human resources or assets, of all migrants are not enough to do for some works which make a barrier for the sick people or those who are not skilled in a particular work, leave behind their homes. At this time it is obvious that these assets together make possible for some people to migrate and not for some. In other words, vulnerabilities might be the same for all the poor but their assets access them to move and influences on their movement. Every household and society is structured by some norms, values, rules and regulations; neighbours, communities, households and kin play some potential and challenging roles who should move and who should not, as mentioned earlier. On other hand, although cultures and institutions, for example, also pursue, no laws and policies have been made for the poor people in Bangladesh. All these transforming structures and processes spur the people to migrate anywhere in Bangladesh. The findings of this study has suggested and agreed with the framework of sustainable rural livelihoods. This framework also suggests that after migration the vulnerable can improve their lives and livelihoods or cope with their vulnerabilities. But the findings make public that as a coping strategy migration might be the one of the many options, the reality in Bangladesh is different from other countries because the migrants are not only enjoying some benefits they are at the same time suffering from various

predicaments. It is noted in the Sustainable Rural Livelihoods Framework that as a livelihood strategy migration with others improves the lives of the poor.

As mentioned above, labour migration has a massive influence on the lives and livelihoods of the working classes of people which has been mentioned by many writers from their respective points of views which give birth to contradictions. Wood (2004) states that migration is a significant livelihood option but it is complex to measure because of its different forms, such as class origins, motivation, risk, permanency, stages, age groups, gender composition and geographical width. Mosse et al (2002) make out that, for some, labour migration is a forced livelihoods response, although it comes from a complex set of social relations rather than simply ecological crisis and subsistence failure. For others, migration enables migrants to save money, accumulate money or invest in assets. They add that while some groups of migrants have surplus income to invest in agriculture, at the same time others are already committed to repay their debt and dependency. They think that the relationship between migration and livelihoods is not absolutely clear-cut, and it continues as a strategy of survival. Bracking (85) suggests that migration is a defensive coping strategy for the poor. There are many factors, which need to be taken into account to understand the influences of internal labour migration, such as gender, space, time and migration context and the strength of the social capital networks (Afsar, 2003). The influences of labour migration on the migrants and their families are shown in the following rural sustainable livelihoods framework.

**Keys**

H= Human capital, P= Physical capital, S= Social capital, N= Natural capital, F= Financial capital, Po= Positive, Ne= Negative



**Source: adapted from DFID Sustainable Rural Livelihoods Framework**

Many writers have mentioned that migration is one of the most important livelihoods strategies for the poorest people in rural Bangladesh. Simultaneously for others, although migration is important, it does not always function positively and rather, much of the time, it carries negative influence. Black (2003) proposes that migrants have little room for improvement in their livelihoods. As Rogaly et al (2003) declare, seasonal labour migration may, on the one hand, improve welfare if people are fortunate. On the other hand, it brings misfortune for those who are unlucky. As Wood (2003) argues, migration is for advancement or desperation. From the above discussion on the case studies from different agro-ecological zones and existing literature on migration suggest that labour migration has some potentialities because it enhances and improves the lives and livelihood of the poor in several ways on the one hand. On the other hand, it is obvious that the migrants confront a range of challenges while they are at their destinations. Not only the migrants but also the left behinds are encountering huge problems which are immeasurable. So, it is possible to say that the sustainable rural livelihood framework fit with the rural context of Bangladesh up to the movements of the poor and a part of their improved livelihoods. Simultaneously, it is important to note that the sustainable rural livelihoods frameworks did not realise that after the movement the migrants and the left behinds might confront huge problems at their destinations and origins respectively.

**Conclusion**

Labour migration strictly influences the lives and livelihoods of the poorest people in rural Bangladesh, which should be noted as the norm rather than the exception, and not a transitory phenomenon. These sections of people move out owing to various social, natural and political reasons, and manage to move through social and financial capitals. With the intention of coping with the vulnerable situation they choose migration as a key livelihoods option but many of them gain only small successes whereas some fail to meet their expectations completely and also some are faced by the more vulnerable situation. Actually although labour migration contributes to particular positive and negative outcomes of the migrants and their families, a number of variables lead to specific outcomes. Not only the poorest people but also other categories of people whose livelihoods depend on it or not choose migration as choice. Whether migration is for choice or livelihoods enhancing avenue of the poor, the sustainable rural livelihoods framework to a greater extent fit for the real poverty situation in rural Bangladesh. However, it needs some modifications at the outcome levels because the lower strata people face some problems which lead them to move worse situations. These situations do not cover the sustainable rural livelihoods framework in the perspective of Bangladesh society. It is no doubt difficult to assess fully the influences of labour migration, on the different

groups of people in rural Bangladesh. So there is a vital need to do re-research particularly on the labour migration and re-examine its influences on the lives and livelihoods of the different categories of people in rural Bangladesh.

**Note:** This article is emerged from the data of 'Livelihoods of the Extreme Poor (LEP) study, which was conducted by PROSHIKA, a leading national NGO in Bangladesh, collaborating with the Department for International Development (DfID), UK.

### **Acknowledgements**

I am, firstly, very grateful to Proshika since it gave me the opportunity to work on this study. I greatly owe Dr. Iqbal Alam Khan, Deputy Director, Impact Monitoring and Evaluation Cell (IMEC), Proshika and Dr. Janet Seeley, Advisor of this study, School of Development Studies, University of East Anglia, UK because they dedicated their time providing valuable advice and stimulating guidance which enabled me in producing this article. I would like to express my heartiest thanks to Professor Mr. Quamrul Ahsan Choudhury, Dept. of Sociology, University of Dhaka, because of his inspiration, encouragement and appreciation. Lastly, I am extremely grateful to the villagers who provided me with information impeding their works and spending time.

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